

 **FREE SUPPLEMENT! SKIN DEEP TOP 100 ARTISTS**



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SKIN DEEP

AUGUST '10
ISSUE 188 • £3.95

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We list one hundred artists that are making their mark on the industry

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ARTISTS

FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE

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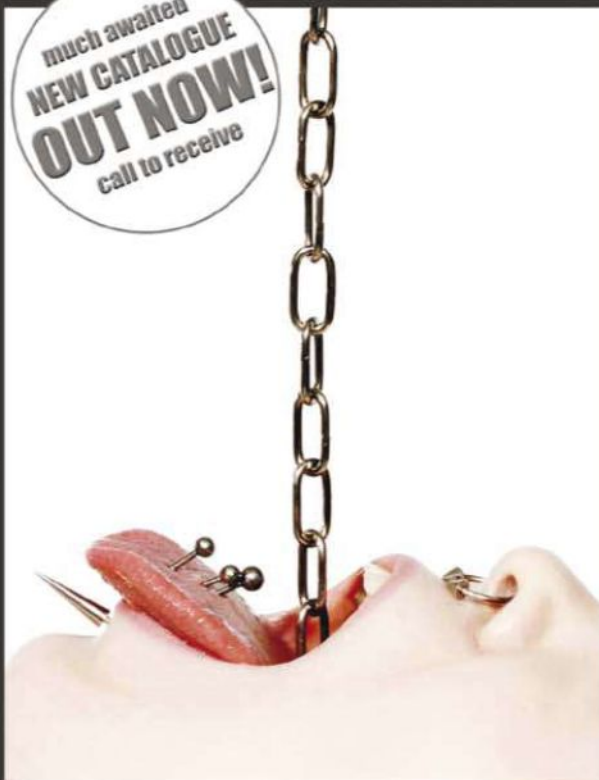
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GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Jazz Publishing, The Old School,
Higher Kinnerton, Chester,
CH4 9AJ, UK.

01244 663400

Fax: 01244 660611

eMail: info@jazzpublishing.co.uk

www.skindEEP.co.uk

EDITOR

Neil Dalleywater

eMail: editor@skindeep.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 212

ART EDITOR

Gareth Evans

eMail: gareth@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 204

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Justine Hart

eMail: production@skindeep.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 235

ACCOUNTS & ADMIN MANAGER

Emma McCrindle

eMail: accounts@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 207

ADMINISTRATION

Jan Schofield

eMail: jan@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 219

Katie-Marie Challinor

eMail: katie@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 Ext. 220

CREDIT CONTROL

Pam Coleman

eMail: pam@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 215

ADVERTISING & EVENTS MANAGER

Shelley Curry

eMail: shelley.curry@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 303

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES

Dee Skinner

eMail: advertising@skindeep.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 301

EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR

Wendy Marks

eMail: wendy.marks@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 ext. 305

CIRCULATION & PROMOTIONS

Katy Cuffin

eMail: kathy@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400 Ext. 237

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES

eMail: magazines@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01778 392086

PUBLISHER

David Gamble

eMail: david@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Stuart Mears

eMail: stuart@jazzpublishing.co.uk
Telephone: 01244 663400

CONTRIBUTORS

**Al Overdrive, Sarah Angel,
Gareth Fulke, Paul Callaby**

PRINTING

Warners Midlands plc

DISTRIBUTION

Susan Saunders

eMail: susan.saunders@seymour.co.uk
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Has it really been a year since the last extremely successful Tattoo Jam convention? It feels like only yesterday that we packed everything away and took a well-earned break from the festivities but the show is upon us again. By the time this issue of Skin Deep hits the shelves, Tattoo Jam will be only days away and Doncaster will be readying itself for the annual influx of tattoo fans yet again.

Last year was our first year at the new home of Tattoo Jam, Doncaster Racecourse, and everyone I spoke to had a blast at the show. This year, the organisers have even more in store for those making the pilgrimage to the racecourse.

Tattoo Jam's tagline is "the biggest tattoo show in the UK" and with over three hundred international and homegrown tattooists attending, who am I to dispute this?

Can you imagine three hundred artists in one building, all tattooing? What an immense pot of tattooing talent it will be!

With over 300 working artists, a day devoted specifically to those in the industry (ARTIST friDAY), seminars, tattoo-related workshops, the Tattoo Masters' Ball, trade stands, vendors and lots of live entertainment (30 hands!), Tattoo Jam is an event not to be missed for anyone with even the slightest interest in ink.

After the success of Tattoo Jam 2009, the organisers' aim for the convention is to keep growing and improving each year. To this effect we have listened and acted on comments made by artists, vendors and public alike, and thank you for the many positive comments made.

The tattooing titans attending this year come from all corners of the globe including the likes of Paul Booth, he of Last Rites fame, as well as the master of all things bio and realistic, Roman Abrego. The most publicised man in tattooing, Brandon Bond, will be attending along with All

Or Nothing cohorts Dave Tedder and Tony Mancia. There are many, many artists who are at the top of the tattooing tree attending, ready to tattoo all weekend!

The main room, the Lazarus Exhibition Hall, is large enough to comfortably hold the majority of the UK and international tattoo artists and traders, with separate function rooms available that will provide you with plenty of musical entertainment and a food hall that caters for all and diets.

Also, with the demand for Tattoo Jam growing, we wanted to find a site with plenty of open space and parking that is easily accessible nationwide. Doncaster Racecourse proved perfect as it provides parking for up to 3,000 vehicles, and its location in the heart of the country means that there are good road and rail links from both the North and South.

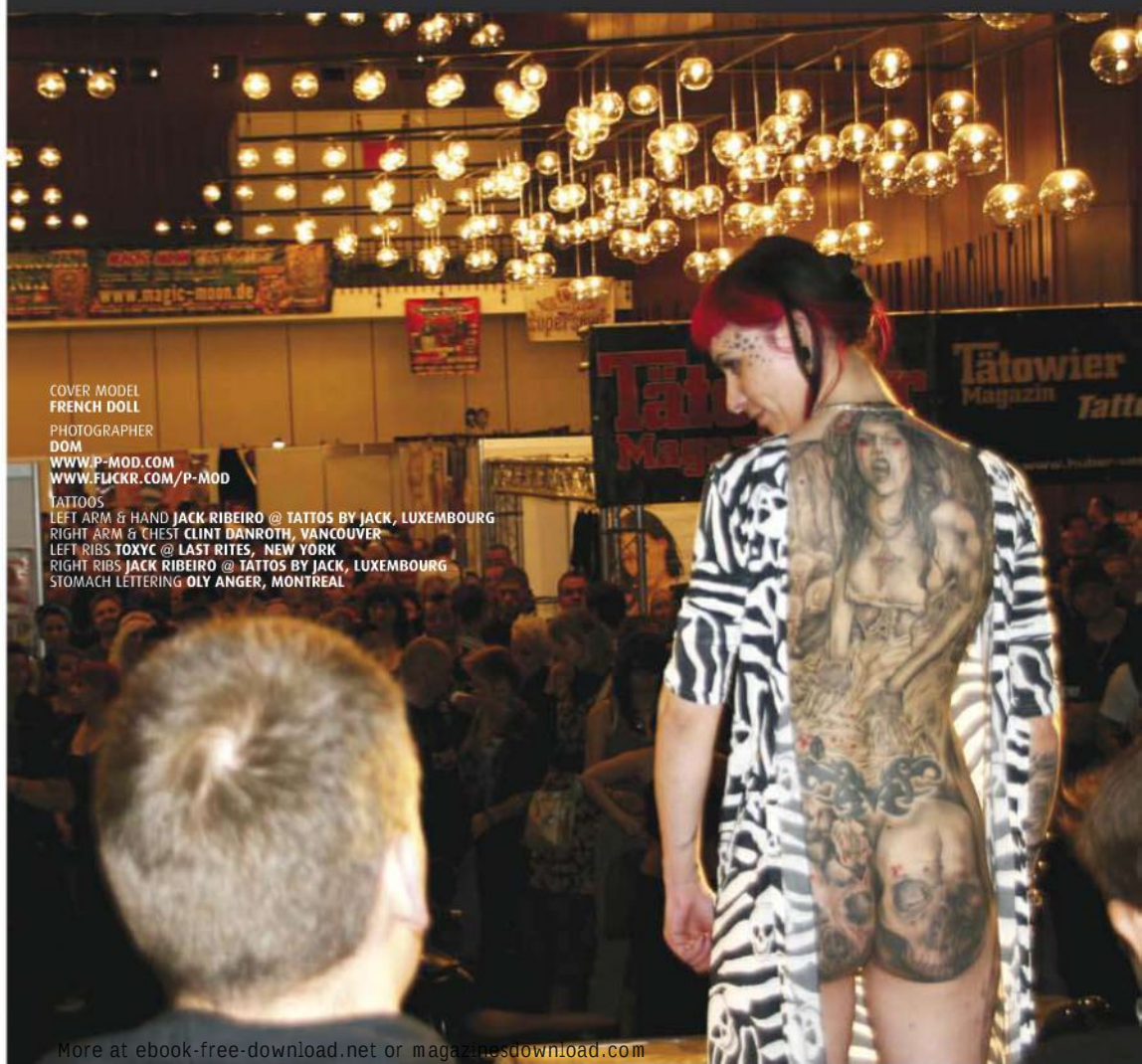
If you want something a little different this summer, come for a mischievous weekend at the races. With 302 Artists confirmed so far, you will not be disappointed...

ARTIST friDAY 2010 will see Tattoo Jam once again, held over three days with the first day being a trade-only day known as :

ARTIST friDAY

This is an exclusive day for registered tattooists, piercers, guests and associated traders. It will give tattooists a chance to talk shop and chew the fat with other artists, go to some of the many tattoo-related seminars and workshops and even get tattooed by one of the visiting artists. We know that many artists are often too busy working to get inked themselves... so this is your chance!

In the first Tattoo Jam event, we thought we would step into the unknown and introduce something 'new' to UK tattoo events...a trade-only day. Now with the third show



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RIGHT ARM & CHEST CLINT DANROTH, VANCOUVER
LEFT RIBS TOXYC @ LAST RITES, NEW YORK
RIGHT RIBS JACK RIBEIRO @ TATTOOS BY JACK, LUXEMBOURG
STOMACH LETTERING OLY ANGER, MONTREAL

in full motion, we are pleased that we persevered with this course of action, as it has grown year on year, proving popular within the industry and artists as a whole.

To gain access to ARTIST friDAY you need to supply the organisers with a filled out application form, attaching proof of identification - your Health Registration Certificate along with your business card or letterhead.

The day will culminate with the by now legendary Tattoo Masters' Ball where there will be awards, prize giving and the presentation of £3000, yep £3000 to the winner of our exclusive Hornitos tequila design a bottle competition.

Last year's Ball in the new Doncaster Racecourse venue, to put it simply...rocked! But with this year's ball, the organisers hope it will be even more of a good time as they keep challenging themselves to improve year upon year.

Each year the Ball has a fancy dress theme and this year it is... (Drum roll please)...The Wild, WILD West!

(PLEASE NOTE: The Friday night Tattoo Masters' Ball is a tattoo artist, piercer and trade only event and the Tattoo Jam team hope you'll have a great time!

Thank you to all the bands for entering this year's Tattoo Jam "Battle Of The Bands". The final 30 bands that will grace the stage at the show are all named and on the www.tattoojam.co.uk website.

BATTLE OF THE BANDS

This year there will be an outdoor stage opposite the covered main racecourse grandstand. Last year the room was a little 'hot' to say the least, and by moving the BOTB outside, it will make it more pleasurable for band members, sound engineers and public alike; so grab a beer, sit outside and soak up the atmosphere!

In 2009, the competition was so close that the judges could not decide on a single winner. So we would like to congratulate Queensbury and The 925s who were joint Tattoo Jam Battle Of The Bands 2009 winners. Well done, guys.

TICKETS

Sadly, the advance tickets are now off sale but that doesn't stop you from just turning up at the door. We have a bevy of Jazz beauties waiting to greet you with a smile and welcome you to the show.

On the Day Tickets:

Weekend 2 Day Pass **£36.00**
Saturday Single Day Ticket **£20.00**
Sunday Single Day Ticket **£20.00**

ARTIST friDAY

1-Day Pass, Seminars,
Workshops & Tattoo Masters' Ball **£35.00**
Artist 3-Day Pass, Seminars, Workshops & Tattoo
Masters' Ball **£65.00**

Artist Tickets

To buy artist tickets on the door please remember to bring along proof of identification - either your health registration certificate or business card and letterhead, along with your filled out artist ticket order form.

(PLEASE NOTE: By attending Tattoo Jam it means that you have agreed to the site policies, event ethos and terms and conditions. Thank you for your co-operation in making this a safe, friendly and fun event; we look forward to welcoming you).

This year is going to be bigger, better, more fun and a show that is guaranteed to keep you smiling until next year! Come join in the fun at Tattoo Jam 2010!
www.tattoojam.co.uk



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FREE SUPPLEMENT

SKIN DEEP'S TOP 100 ARTISTS

We list one hundred artists that are leaving their mark on the industry at the moment.



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16 AMANDA RUBY



30 MICK J



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Go Online Today and Join The Coolest Tattoo Forum Around. . .

www.skindeep.co.uk/forums

FALLOUT

Seen an interesting clipping in the press? Got something that you'd like reviewed or featured? Got some spare chocolate or beer? Send them to: Skin Deep, The Old School, Higher Kinnerton, Chester CH4 9AJ OR EMAIL: editor@skindeep.co.uk

PETE MCKEE'S NEW 'A MONTH OF SUNDAYS' ART GALLERY, NOW OPEN

"A Month of Sundays" will specialise in original McKee artwork as well as limited edition work and special one off projects. The gallery will also display work by other artists later in the year.

"I am really excited about opening my first gallery," says Pete. "I want to create a space like no other gallery, a unique place that will be like walking into a giant McKee painting".

The gallery will be open every Wednesday to Saturday from 10am- 5pm www.therealmckee.co.uk



© JESSICA WEBER PHOTOGRAPHY

VINTAGE ROCKS!

Nestling quietly but confidently in a leafy suburb of vibrant South Belfast is a very special little place owned and run with love by a very special lady.

Clare Afshar is the owner and head stylist of Vintage Rocks Hair Parlour. The walls are awash with Gil Elvgren pin-ups, the floor is eye-catching with its black and white tiling, and the furniture evoking 17th century French luxury is most inviting. "I guess since an early age I have been interested in glamour, how beautiful girls and guys look in old movies, throughout history and in music" beams Clare. Clare wasted no time in pursuing her dream and started, rather prodigiously, at a Beauty School in Los Angeles at the tender age of 14. By 17 years old she had graduated and travelled to Northern Ireland in 1995.

She opened Vintage Rocks in August 2009 with a very simple mission "I wanted to be able to own a place where I could make women feel sexy, and somewhere that they would come for an experience." Their website and Facebook pages are festooned with positive comments from a litany of beautiful and very happy ladies sporting incredibly glamorous styles, and even a few guys too.

This is in no way describable as an ordinary hair salon; the moment you enter, you are whisked back to an era of screen sirens, of old Hollywood glamour and of leading man charm. Clare and her staff at Vintage Rocks live and breathe vintage style and rock and roll attitude. "I'm here and I'm loving it," she exclaims proudly. "Every time I walk into this place, I smile; it's got a sweet vibe."

Specialising in colouring, cutting and creative styling from beautiful natural highlights to glamorous Hollywood pin curls, each hair service combines both glamour and decadence. And for the gents... offering men's cutting and styling with a rock 'n' roll flair.

Clare prides herself in getting out and about and working with various artists and photographers. Vintage Rocks has brought mini parlours to such diverse locations as bike rallies, Burlesque Shows, independent trade markets, bluegrass festivals and gala balls. And she has bigger plans to come. So keep an eye out, you might just see the Vintage Rocks Crew somewhere along the way.

www.vintagerockshairparlour.com



NEW ARTIST, NEW BEGINNINGS

BROAD STREET STUDIO in BATH, are pleased to announce that they have a new tattoo artist joining the team.

Tattoo artist Marcos Attwood will be bringing a flavour of the traditional to the studio. Marcos will be starting in July and is taking bookings now. Check out some of his work on the Broad Street Tattoo website.

www.broadstreetstudio.co.uk



YZ GUEST SPOT AT RUBY ARTS

Yang Zhuo from YZ Tattoo in China will be working at Ruby Arts from the 1st August for about 6 weeks. For any enquiries or to make an appointment with this outstanding artist please call Adam or Mick on 01904 620114. www.micktomo.com



MONKID MOVES

Andy Bowler and the rest of the Monkido tattoo studio have finally outgrown their studio and as such, have moved lock stock and barrel to a new premises to: 57 Chapel Street, Belper, Derbyshire.

By the time you read this, the new studio will have had its official opening and hopefully the hangovers will have abated, offering you some superb tattoo work from both Andy and Mark.

The contact details are still the same 01773 821666, www.monkido.com email andy@monkido.com.

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artwork by Paolo Acuna www.dailymelbourn.com

RITE OF PASSAGE TATTOO AND ARTS CONVENTION

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Rites of Passage is a brand new tattoo festival that celebrates creativity as a means to connect - not only with ourselves, but with one another, our various cultures, our ancestors and the Earth.

People have marked their bodies with tattoos for thousands of years. These permanent designs - sometimes plain, sometimes elaborate, always personal - have served as amulets, status symbols, declarations of love, signs of religious belief, adornments and even forms of punishment.

By celebrating the art of tattoo, music, visual art and environmental awareness, we're creating a dynamic, shared space where people from all walks of life can look back on our tribal history and take conscious, informed steps forward towards positive change.

The ROP crew are aiming to be as eco-friendly as possible, showcasing everything from organic locally grown produce to eco-friendly tattoo supplies. 100% of the profits made from the festival will go towards buying agricultural land, which will be replanted with native rainforest.

The team have handpicked the world's finest tattoo artists to showcase their work in the city of Melbourne, Australia. The Rites of Passage Festival is your opportunity to see world-class masters at work — and to experience it first-hand. With top-notch artists like: Sean Herman, Paolo Acuna, Trevor McStay, Jo Harrison, Nick Baxter, Rachie Brains and many, many others, you'd be mad to miss this show.

I am already preparing to sell a kidney to go! Places are very limited, so to avoid disappointment make a booking with your preferred artist by contacting them direct through the link: www.ritesofpassagefestival.com/events



KEV



JAMMES

COCK UP.
COBSLERS.
CUM BUCKETS.

In the Ink 'n' Iron convention report in issue 186, I credited a tattoo to Tommi at No Regrets. It should have gone to Kev at 2 Guns, Darlaston, Birmingham. Also on page 59 was a lovely black and grey Mark Ryden-inspired tattoo was credited to Amanda West when it should have read Jammes @ Woody's Tattoos, High Wycombe. Sorry for any confusion caused.



CLOTHING FROM THE DARKSIDE!

Derby-based clothing company Darkside Clothing are an alternative fashion company that specialises in high quality, well-designed apparel for those with a bit of dark humour about them. Ethically sourced and sweat shop free, the products are of the highest quality and the range includes t-shirts, hoodies, jeans, tops, skirts, baby clothes and much more.

Darkside are continually working with some of the most acclaimed graphic artists in the world to bring you the best of the best in terms of merchandise that is available in the UK and Europe.

Darkside have informed us that they now have their range stocked in many tattoo studios up and down the country. Check out their website for more information on their entire clothing range at: www.darksideclothing.com

ALLEY CATS TATTOO PARLOUR OPENS ITS CAT FLAP, SORRY, DOORS

If you like the feature on Mick J's work starting on page 30 you may be interested to hear that as part of Blue Dragon's 21st anniversary they have opened a new studio called Alley Cats Tattoo Parlour in Haywards Heath in the heart of West Sussex.

For more information on the artists working at Alley Cats go to: www.alleycatstattoo.co.uk

Alleycats Tattoo Parlour, Haywards Heath, West Sussex. RH16 3AS
Tel: 01444440353
www.bluedragon.tattoo.co.uk



INKSLINGERS! NEWEST MEMBER

Inkslingers Newbury are pleased to announce that Lin Carville has now joined the team as a full-time tattooist and body piercer. Inkslingers can be found at: 4 Pound Street, Newbury, Berks. Tel: 01635 841841
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INNOCENCE LOST

Hi,

I am the proud owner of three tattoos, one on each shoulder blade, and a leg piece. I was recently introduced to a friend of a friend whom I have never met before. We got talking and this conversation led onto my tattoos. They commented that they were "totally surprised" to see that I have tattoos as I seem too innocent!

Why on earth would displaying an artists work on my body make me "less innocent?"

This is just a prime example of how there are still such small-minded people out there who just look at the body art and make pathetic assumptions.

Emma

Via editor@skindeep.co.uk

SURELY A WINNER?

Hi there,

I just thought I'd get in touch and let you see the awesome piece of work that I've just had done by Dan Henk from Austin, Texas, who came over as a special guest invited to the Liverpool Tattoo Convention. Nine hours of pain under the needle was well worth it in the end, BUT the major complaint I had was that as Dan didn't get finished until 8pm and he hadn't entered for the "Best Tattoo of the Day" as he wasn't sure it would be finished in time. Despite my efforts to talk to the judges and say that Dan was a "featured guest artist" from America they wouldn't let me enter, which seemed to also piss Dan off as in the States you can enter right up until the judging begins. As all the other tattoo artists commented on his work saying that it should have been a sure winner that day, I wanted to get in touch to give Dan the recognition he deserves for this piece of work, and also hear your views on it.

Many thanks
Andi Hodgetts
(Wakefield)



Hi Andy,

firstly congratulations on an incredible tattoo. I have been a big fan of Dan's work for a long time and he has done you proud! Sadly, having run a few competitions at shows it is not always possible to enter tattoos right

up to the last minute, that's why usually, there is a cut-off time for competitions.

There is quite a bit of paperwork involved to make sure the competitions are run fairly and smoothly. Can you imagine having a long line of just finished tattoos running up on stage at the last moment? It would be chaos.

I thought that the competitions at the Liverpool show were very well run but sadly "rules is rules" I'm afraid.

All the best and thanks for letting us see your superb tattoo.

Neil

DON'T FORGET THE LITTLE GUYS

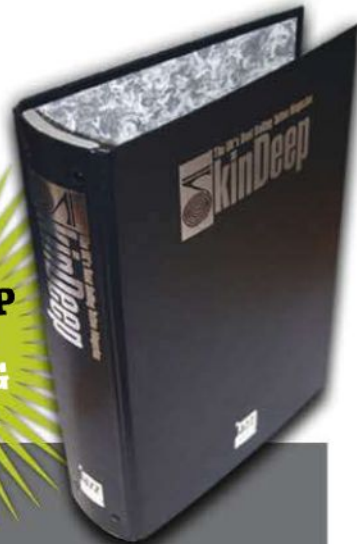
Dear Skin Deep,

I'd like to take a moment to look at the people "behind the scenes" so to speak, a look and nod to the desk monkeys, tube scrubbers and arsehole-fobbers - the lowly receptionist.

Receptionist are the first point of contact for most tattoo shops and can make or break a shops reputation with the fickle public, yet they never receive any credit as they hide behind their tattooist overlords. However without them, businesses would crumble, some artists would be lost and society as we know it could well crumble into the sea.

Therefore I suggest maybe having a poll of readers to vote for their receptionist of choice, a silverback among the throng of desk monkeys everywhere. Those receptionists that calm the nervous, get rid of the dicks, make the tea and generally keep all the cogs in the machine running smoothly. No prizes necessary, just a nod and pat on the back from the community.

**FREE
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BINDER
WINNING
LETTER!**



Maybe I'm just talking balls, or maybe you've done this before but I think it would be nice.

And yes, I am a receptionist! **Mark**

Hi Mark,

I completely agree with you, receptionists are the linchpins of many a successful studio. You guys do have a sometimes-unenviable position as front of shop people and many studios would fall apart without your organisational skills.

I'm certain that many a nervous tattoo virgin has been calmed and reassured by the cheerful, ever-smiling and friendly face that greets them as they take those first tentative steps through the door.

You all get a big thanks from me and I'm certain that many tattooists realise that you guys keep the studios running smoothly!

Neil

THOUGHT PROVOKING

Dear Skin Deep,

I have just finished flicking through my copy of Issue 186 and after reading 'Tattooing and Self Harm' felt compelled to write in, which is very unlike me.

I was absolutely horrified that there are people in the world that associate tattooing with self-harm. I know and understand that it's a personal choice whether to get tattooed or not, and there are people who will never understand why anyone would choose to mark themselves for life, or as some refer to it as 'scarring yourself for life'. I wonder if it is these people that associate tattooing with self-harm? After reading the article I spoke to a few people about their opinions and none of them agreed with it, but then again, they were all tattooed!

I myself have tattoos, and I self-harm. I think the reason I personally was so upset by the association of the two, is that my self-harming is something about myself that I absolutely cannot stand. I don't even fully understand the reasons why I do it, but if I could stop I would. I look at the scars that I've created and cringe every time I see them. Self-harming for me is the only way I can cope with the pain I feel inside.

My tattoos on the other hand,

well, I can't stop staring at them! I see them as a beautiful addition to my body, something of which I am immensely proud of. In fact, one day I hope to cover up my self-harming scars with beautiful tattoos.

Is it because you are purposefully causing yourself pain whilst getting a tattoo that the two are associated? I think most tattooed folk would agree it's not the pain that gets them back in for their next ink fix, it's the end result, whereas the opposite could be said for self harming.

Anyway, these are just my thoughts! I just wanted to say as a person who has experienced both that for me the two will never ever be interlinked. Thanks for another great issue and definitely a thought-provoking piece!

Big love xxx **Alex**

WE MUST BE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT!

Hi, Just a quick letter.

I started reading Skin Deep last year and now subscribe. I'm so glad I do because now at the beginning of each month, I get in from work and there's my copy of Skin Deep waiting for me, which is so much better than the usual bills. I f***ing love Skin Deep magazine! Cheers. **Adge Williams**
via editor@skindeep.co.uk

PATENT PENDING TATSOUL X AND X-LITE



BED POSITION

CHAIR POSITION

STRADDLE POSITION

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DOLLEY FEATURE

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TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY: GARETH FUXE

HULL INK

Perched right out on the East coast of Yorkshire, Hull, as many can imagine, could be seen as rather boring. Admittedly, it was a sideways rainy, cloudy and windy day when we arrived on a bitter Sunday in early May. But fear not, Hull is an amazing place; you just have to know where to look.



ASHLEIGH BY JOHN KAYSER @ SKIN CITY



RICHARD BY SCOTT MUSTAPICK @ INK V STEEL, LEEDS

Look at the Humber bridge for example, yes some would say it was an eyesore; I see it as a thing of engineering and design beauty. Look at The Deep Aquarium, designed by Sir Terry Farrell, an amazing angular piece of architecture, which, like the bridge, could be seen as an eyesore, but it stands proud looking out over the River Hull and the Humber estuary. Look at the ship yards and repair shops, with the broken shells of once great ships, slowly rusting away. They are, in my bizarre outlook on all things decaying, stunningly beautiful. I think people assume that because Hull is one letter away from Dull that that's what it is. You'd be very, very wrong. Where else, on a cold grey day in May, could offer a wonderfully matte backdrop for some very colourful and talented creative people?

Can it be true? Has it really been a whole year since I was last in Hull? It seems like

last week! These are some of the questions I was mulling over in my head on the journey down to Kingston-upon-Hull, a journey made a tad longer by the fact we went via Doncaster! (I admit it was my fault, it involved some song I hate and the threat of chucking the CD out of the car window, right at a crucial turn off, but hey-ho, I digress).

As this is the second year out for the Hull Ink convention, I was interested to see how the show had been improved from last year. I wasn't disappointed. The show was again held in the beautiful surroundings of Hull City Hall, a building that I find as intriguing as it is stunning. With its wood panelled and stone carved staircases to its domed and ornate atrium, this venue, like I said last year, offers a fantastic backdrop for a convention.

As we arrived about an hour after the doors opened, I expected the place to be filled to the rafters, yet I was slightly taken aback by how quiet the main room was compared to last year. This was made up for the fact that even though there weren't that many people inside, the atmosphere around the convention was like condensed electricity. Coupled with a real laid-back and chilled vibe, I knew this show was going to be good.

It was awesome to see some regular faces from the circuit including, Bob



OLLY BY RONNIE GODDARD @ EXTREME BODY ART, BOSTON



ZARA BY HAZEL @ DESIGN 4 LIFE, LIVERPOOL



ADAM BY DANIEL WATSON @ VIDA LOCA



SAW BY JOHN ANDERTON, NEMESIS TATTOO



DAVE BY JAN MOAT @ IDENTITY TATTOO, BRIDLINGTON



MIKE BY MAT LAPPING @ CREATIVE VANDALS, HULL



LOUISE BY SCOTT MUSTAPICK @ INK VS STEEL, LEEDS

As this is the second year out for the Hull Ink convention, I was interested to see how the show had been improved from last year.

Hoyle, Ryan Davies, Karl Fletcher, Mat Lapping, Jan Moat John Anderton (sans sideboards), Hazel from D4L and Mick Tomo, alongside some lesser-known artists like Jess from White Rabbit (who made her debut at Hull last year) and Pavol Dutko.

The show was accompanied by a handful of trade stalls alongside the musical sounds of the cover band, The Chiefs of Leon (no prizes for who they covered) and the street magician Dominic Li, who was wowing punters with his amazing abilities in close up magic. I could have spent all





PAVOL DUTKO @ SKA TATTOO, CZ

PATRYK BY MAT LAPPING @ CREATIVE VANDALS, HULL



CHRIS BY JAN MOAT @ IDENTITY TATTOO, BRIDLINGTON

The convention rolled on and before long, time seemed to evaporate and it was the hour for the judging and competitions.

day watching him perform various card and rubber band tricks, but unfortunately I had other pressing matters to attend to.

Even though the attendance this year, in my eyes, wasn't as high as last year (probably due to the bank holiday and all the football that was going on) the tattooed faithful who were there were displaying some really canny work, and I had no problems delving in head first into photographing some pretty tight tattoo work.

As usual here are some of my personal highlights from the show. Let's start off big with the Best of event winner Mike by Mat Lapping; boy this guy goes from strength to awesome strength, with his use of bright, bold colour and composition coupling to produce an amazing forearm piece. Mat's work, if you haven't already, I implore you too go take a look; it will make your eyes water!

Staying with stunning colour, I welcome you to feast on Thomas by Pavol Dutko at SKA Tattoo, CZ; in my muddled mind, I can't remember if I have seen Pavol's work before, but flicking through his portfolio I was very impressed, and this cheeky tattoo of a girl licking a toad is no exception. The smoothness of his tattooing and the use of matte-like colour really make this cartoon piece stunning.

Chris and Dave by Jan Moat; these two sleeve pieces are just amazing. Jan's tattooing has gone from strength to dark and twisted strength over the past couple of years. These two black and grey sleeves incorporate solid black and shade with portraiture work

which would make your eyes bleed, and his colour work is worth a look too!

To single out Chris here; he sat for a piece a while ago, which was a collaboration between Jan and Mat Lapping, and although these artists come from relatively different backgrounds, the piece they have created together is nothing short of mastery. I'm looking forward to some more collaboration by these two in the future.

Emma by Bob Hoyle; I feel we tend to associate Mr Hoyle with black and grey work, but this full colour three-quarter sleeve is a testament to Bob's versatility as an artist.

Louise by Scott at Ink Vs Steel; this delicate black and grey elephant Ganesh was a great spot by Davinia as I had totally missed it. The subtle shading in this piece looked more like a shaded drawing than a tattoo.

What convention wouldn't be complete without a tip of the proverbial hat to Hazel at Design 4 Life, the Jonny Depp Mad Hatter she laid down on Zara was another great example of Hazel's individual tattooing style, with her cartoon-esque style and use of muted and dark colour made this tattoo just beautiful. A well deserved win in the Colour Small category.

The convention rolled on and before long, time seemed to evaporate and it was the hour for the judging and competitions. This saw a massive turnout of people exhibiting their work for the panel, so many so, that, when it came to the announcements of awards, there

had to be second and in some cases third recalls of people to be judged; this I feel was down to the sheer body of people with quality work to show. The judging and awards did take some time and a few people fell restless, but I found it a good opportunity to have a little rest and a chat!

After the awards, there were one or two machines still buzzing away to their own solo staccato beat, but it was time, unfortunately, to leave a very chilled and harmonious convention

behind. I just hope the Hull crew can pull another good show out the bag next year and improve on an already solid foundation. ★

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

BLACK AND GREY SMALL

OLLY SELBY BY RONNIE GODDARD
@ EXTREME BODY ART, BOSTON

BLACK AND GREY LARGE

CHRIS BY JAN MOAT
@ IDENTITY, BRIDLINGTON

TRIBAL

MATTHEW PORTER BY RONNIE GODDARD
@ EXTREME BODY ART, BOSTON

ORIENTAL

ADAM BY DANNY WATSON
@ VIDA LOCA TATTOO, BOLTON

COLOUR SMALL

ZARA BY HAZEL NICHOLLS
@ D4L, LIVERPOOL

COLOUR LARGE

LAUREN BY BOB HOYLE
@ GARGHOYLE, ELAND

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MIKE ROBINSON BY MATT LAPPING
@ CREATIVE VANDALS, HULL

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Tom Sugar
Alan Hale
Lee Mallett
Amanda West
Susan Beardmore
Lisa Priestley
Nick Whybrow
Mike Owl
Mick J
Jed Harwood
Darren Hubbard
Reno
Rob Ratcliffe
Fil Norman
Toni Moore
Jeanne

Tanane Whitfield
Arran Burton
Brandon Bond
Dave Tedder
Leigh Oldcorn

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Colin 'Doc' Fell
Darius Niewczas
Hazel Nicholls
Julie Clarke
Martin Crosthwaite
Terry Fuller
Mark Bailey
Rose Price
Oliver Jerrold
Tem Sosa
Mat Lapping
Scott Mustapic
Simon Caves
Eak
Tony Homchan
Tiny Miss Becca
Steve Vinall
Simon Erl
Bryan Reynolds
Claire Reid
John 'Sake' Karampetos
Matt Difa
Claudia De Sabe
Javi Lee
Raquel C.T
Charissa Gregson
Theresa Gordon-Wade
Benjamin Stone
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Mark Brown
Kevin Denny
Matt Hunt
Andy Bowler
Amanda Ruby
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Simon Ashley
John Anderton
Lal Hardy
Luca Ortis
Matt Black
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Sharon Caudill
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Chantale Coady
Jan Moat
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AMANDA RUBY



Amanda Ruby first came to our attention at the Halloween Bash in Devon, last year, with an exquisite black and grey leg piece that quite literally, stood out from the crowd. With parents who are both artistic and "financial whizzes", Amanda's career could have been influenced in either direction. Fortunately for us ink collectors the world over, the art and tattoo industry came out on top!



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Having been born in Zimbabwe and spending the first 21 years of her life there, Amanda Ruby felt it was time to flee a country that she states "wrapped her up in cotton wool", in search of something more. An adept artist but leaving behind her a trail of dissatisfying art-based jobs; she finally found solace in the tattoo world when she joined the ranks at Squid Ink, in Folkestone, Kent. Two and a half years on, her experience in the art industry has undoubtedly helped her tattoo ability, and passion, leap from strength to strength at a rapid speed. Having already created her own distinct and recognisable style so early on in her career, by mixing realism with finely intricate pattern work, Amanda Ruby is definitely a tattooist to keep an eye on...

SO WHAT GOT YOU STARTED IN TATTOOING?

Right, well this is always a bit of a weird one. Because I come from Zimbabwe, born and bred there, lived there for 21 years. And they didn't have tattoo shops back then, I don't know about now as I haven't been back, I go to South Africa rather than there. So it's one of those "no one I knew had them". I was right into the alternative lifestyle but tattoos weren't really part of it. Weird.

WERE YOUR PARENTS ARTY?

Dad's really musical and he does a lot of watercolours and stuff like that, but he was actually a Chief Executive of a bank. The other side of him that I didn't really get; the financial whizz and then the arty side, I did. So yeah, basically I did three years of art college then went into advertising, because it was really the only way to go over there. There was one art



course that was kind of graphic design based, and that led me into advertising which was the only place to go. Hated it and just designed covers and brochures. Figure drawing has always been my strength, I've always done a lot of pencil drawing, which is why I kind of veer to black and grey tattoos. That to me is what I'm comfortable with. Then after about 2 years of advertising I decided to leave the country. I felt I needed to get out of Zimbabwe, because you're wrapped up in cotton wool, it's just too beautiful, and the rest of world is sort of like "who cares", you know?

SO YOU CAME STRAIGHT TO THE UK?

Yeah, because my mum and dad originate from here. They've never been back; they're in Cape Town now. But yeah, so I sort of ended up, having been here a few times as a kid and stuff, gravitated toward England really. I went to London and worked in pubs, slept on workshop floors and ended up in tower block in Deptford (laughs) and then decided that Folkestone was a much nicer place. Basically I then just worked in a place like Pronta-Print; then I was poached by another print company who offered me more money, so I went to work for them, which again was just doing the artwork side of things and I got fed up with that pretty quickly. I then ended up painting clocks in the old high street, but



THEN I WAS THINKING, "HOW AM I EVER GOING TO GET INTO THIS?" BECAUSE I WAS OLDER, AND A WOMAN.

it was always art in one way or another! I just never found the art form that was making me passionate. Then without going into too much detail, because we obviously despise scratchers, I actually did get the opportunity to use some tattoo equipment on myself and absolutely loved it. Then I was thinking, "How am I ever going to get into this?" because I was older, and a woman. But obviously now we know that's not such a big deal. I mean we're only talking 2 and a half years ago. But Miami Ink, to be honest, I totally loved it, Kat Von D, and I thought "I could do that", it's just the sort of thing I could draw. And everyone was saying to me; "Why don't you try tattooing?" Obviously I hadn't picked up the machine or been

given that opportunity. Just came in here and I said to Rob, which was a bit naughty... I just came in with the intention of just watching how a professional tattooist works. And then thinking "ok right." So Matt did this piece on me, a Celtic band, but being Matt it took two sessions (laughs). Which was actually a really good thing. As it turned out, they'd been looking for an apprentice for eight months by advertising in Skin Deep.

I had no idea about this but just happened to overhear the conversation, and mentioned to Matt that I do a bit of... y'know... I didn't mention that I'd tattooed myself! But he said, "Bring your portfolio in" and then of course Rob



saw me and was like "Come on, come through, let's have a look" and that's it really. They loved what I did and gave me a job. I just think it was so fateful, the way everything just worked out. It was just weird, it's always that thing of, "Oh god, if only I'd started sooner..." but then it's like Rob always said, all that art experience that I've had is perhaps why I've picked it up (I think) as quickly as I have.

JUDGING BY THE WORK ON YOUR ARM YOU DIDN'T FIND IT PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TO START WITH.

I think that's what helped really, I don't think Rob believed that I'd done it! (laughs) He was like "I knew you had the natural potential!" but I think amongst the shop it was always like "Did she really do that?" But that did help get me the job for sure. I think he had me doing my first portrait after 3 months. He just let me go with it.

WAS IT QUITE NERVE RACKING TO START WITH?

No! That's the weird thing, 'cos Matt was like "It took me years... just the fear of putting someone through that pain" but to me it was a canvas and I can't look at it like that. I think if you look at it like that, that is gonna slow you down. I've done it to myself; I know how it feels. If you want a tattoo, it is gonna hurt. So I don't have that problem; it sounds sort of cruel for me to say I don't really care if you're in pain or not, I do. And I do feel for the person when it's going for hours and you know they're suffering. And then I apologise profusely! (laughs) But just tell them to keep going with it, it's all mental. It's all in your head; I



definitely think that, that whole pain threshold thing. Everyone feels pain in the same way; I think it's just how you deal with it mentally.

MOST OF THE STUFF WE SEE YOU DO, ALTHOUGH IT'S BIG, IS VERY INTRICATE.

Intricate yes, oh god yeah. This is the trouble; I make the rod for my own back. And this is the thing as Rob had to say to me, "Just open up a little bit," because my style of drawing has always been, "The more detailed I can get, the better" but obviously with tattooing you've got to worry about the aging side of it. I've sort of

worked out ways though...like I use grey shade instead of black when it comes to very fine detail because it's gonna hold out better. It's just little tricks that I'm teaching myself to work out what's going to last and what's not. So yeah, it's a learning curve isn't it, the whole thing?

I IMAGINE THAT'D MAKE YOU PROGRESS FURTHER IN A WAY. SO WHO DO YOU ADMIRE?

Who do I admire? I love Sabine Gaffron, her style... I don't see a lot of it but what I have seen is absolutely stunning. Other people: I love Daniel Dimattia, I love his stuff. It's



MY FASCINATION FROM AN EARLY AGE HAS BEEN ANCIENT EGYPT. IT WAS PROBABLY CLEOPATRA AND ELIZABETH TAYLOR THAT DID IT!

pattern work but it's done in a totally different way, and I love it. It's his, you can see his stuff from a mile. Absolutely love it. Erm...other people...I mean obviously Bob Tyrrell, you've gotta love his stuff as it's just brilliantly done. Joshua Carlton, really unusual approach to things. Almost kind of like watercolour? But with a real depth in there, really nice. Who else? There's so many coming out aren't there.

I HAD A PHONE CALL YESTERDAY FROM SOMEONE ASKING TO SEND PHOTOGRAPHS INTO SKIN DEEP, WHICH OF COURSE WE GET A LOT. AND I LOOKED ON THE WEBSITE AND HER STUFF WAS INCREDIBLE. AND I'D NEVER HEARD OF HER BEFORE.

Yeah, it is scary how many good artists are coming out now. I think it's good because it makes you, as an artist, go, "Right, I've just gotta get better, better, better." My style that I'm trying develop, that you can probably see, is this combination of pattern work and realism, which isn't done very much.

YOU'LL PROBABLY FIND IN THE NEXT YEAR OR SO PEOPLE TRYING THE SAME THING.

Yeah, exactly. I can see it coming. As long as I initiated it! (laughs) As long as people know that! I'm persuading people into it. It's one of those things where people come in with definite ideas and you say, "Well how about..." and more often than not they will go with it.

HAVING LOOKED AT YOUR PORTFOLIO AND YOUR ARTWORK YOU CAN SEE IT'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND SOMETHING NEW, AND IT REALLY IS SPECIAL.

Well I hope so. That is my thing and I just want to get better and better, and I don't want to get bored of my own style. Just got to keep developing it and do your own thing.

FROM AN ART BACKGROUND, ARE THERE ANY PAINTERS OR SCULPTORS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED YOU?

It's funny as I was thinking about that. My

fascination from an early age has been ancient Egypt. It was probably Cleopatra and Elizabeth Taylor that did it! (laughs) But yeah, loved the Egyptians, been to Egypt twice. The paintings in particular in the tombs, you know you can tell...you've got good artists and bad artists. But the good ones are absolutely incredible. So that's something that's always fascinated me. Then the other two are Leonardo and Michelangelo, which again, I can remember as a kid just trawling through my dad's books. Just the sculptures and things of Michelangelo were incredible. And Leonardo with his sketches and his whole ideas. I know they're not modern day artists but I suppose they've always inspired me, well, I wouldn't even say inspired me but I suppose I've always had a fascination for the human figure really. Eyes in particular, don't know why, I just love eyes!

WE MET AT THE HALLOWEEN BASH LAST YEAR, WAS THAT YOUR FIRST CONVENTION AND YOU'VE DONE A FEW MORE SHOWS SINCE THEN. HOW ARE YOU FINDING THOSE?

Loving it, but I've only done Newport since then. I absolutely loved it. And I think in some ways doing it on my own was definitely a better bet because I felt a lot more in control. Obviously it's nice to have someone with you, like I had Sam with me, she's not a tattooist. But she was there, she works in the shop and so she was dealing with customers for me and coming to me while I was tattooing. And it just worked out really, really well.

YEAH IF YOU'RE GOING TO TATTOO IN A DIFFERENT AREA YOU SHOULD BE OFFERING YOUR SERVICES TO A NEW CLIENTELE.

Exactly. And they will be there, if they like your work they will be there. At Newport I did Sam just to start, so that I was doing something when people first started coming in. But from that moment on I was just inundated with people wanting work done. ☺



PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS COME TO YOU, OF COURSE THEY WILL IF THEY LIKE YOUR WORK ENOUGH.

And to me, that's what it's about. And then, of course, they're emailing me saying, "when are you gonna be here, where are you gonna be?"...

I'VE ALWAYS SAID TATTOOING IS SUCH A MOVEABLE TRADE REALLY. IF YOU'VE GOT THE SKILLS, YOU NEED MINIMUM AMOUNT OF TOOLS REALLY; THE MAIN THING IS YOURSELF. IT'S THE TALENT THAT YOU CARRY WITH YOU.

People will always come to you, of course they will if they like your work enough. It's interesting. The thing with conventions in particular is that it puts you under pressure. It is a good thing to be put under pressure, that's the game. And I don't think you should be taking customers with you all the time because there is no pressure then. I did a three hour piece on this poor woman's back and she was the first person in the queue waiting outside the door because she'd seen my portfolio the previous day and she was desperate to get straight in there! "Please can you do this for me!"

DO YOU FIND AT CONVENTIONS AND SO ON, AND MEETING PEOPLE OUT AND ABOUT IF YOU'RE NOT WORKING, PEOPLE ARE QUITE ACCEPTING OF YOU BEING A FEMALE TATTOOIST IN WHAT'S QUITE A MALE DOMINATED WORLD?

It's funny because Rob was kind of saying that to me once and I said, "I don't know what it would be like to be a male would I?" I'm not having a problem with it; it's not actually a problem for me. I'm just forging a path for myself and luckily it's working out for me. And I haven't had any negative issues with it at all.

AND THE FACT PEOPLE CAN CLEARLY SEE THAT YOU'RE TALENTED!

(laughs) Hopefully! I don't have this thing of, "Oh she's a woman she's gonna do girly

stuff" and that's a bonus as I don't actually like doing flowers and butterflies and Matt's probably more inclined to do all that than me. If someone said, "Can you do a pattern work butterfly?" then that would be lovely.

HOBBIES? INTERESTS?

You know, not really. I know it sounds pathetic in some ways but it does take your life over and where other people freehand and do their thing, come in and basically just wing it on the day, I do spend hours and hours at home. And I love it. I find it relaxing, it's not like a big deal to me.

Where do you see yourself in the next couple of years? Or are you not thinking that far ahead?

I'm just going with the flow, if you know what I mean? Obviously I am actively promoting myself because there's only one person who can do that and that is you. And I think my thing would be to be well respected within the industry; that is what I would like best. To me that's important.

Who do you want to thank for helping you out?

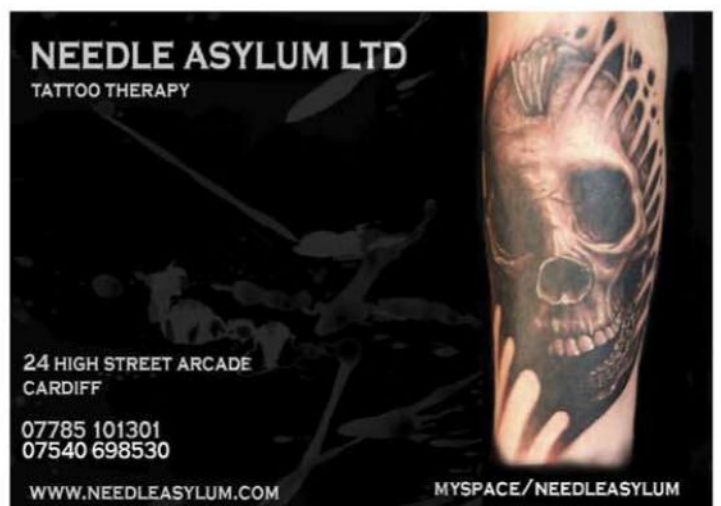
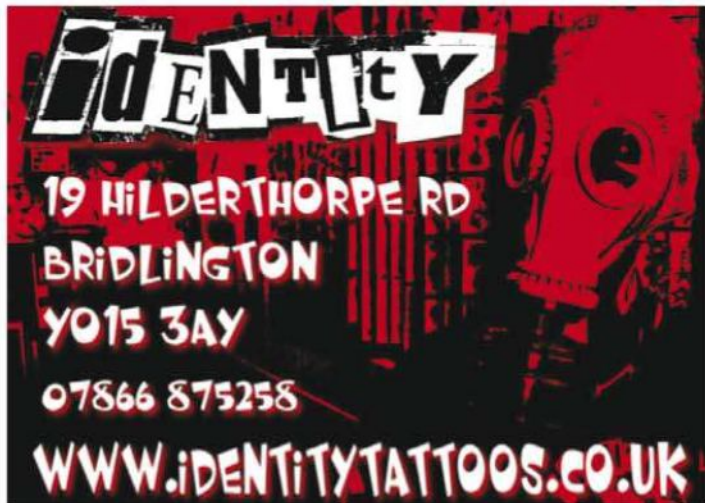
Well it's gotta be Rob hasn't it. It's got to be Rob because if it wasn't for him I wouldn't... you know be here now. He saw something in me and let me go with it. So he's definitely the man. My boyfriend too; to be honest he hasn't ever complained about me. You get this tattooist widow thing don't you, but he has been just sort of like, "Yeah alright if you need to work late you need to work late. If you need to do conventions that's fine."

What do your folks think about your tattoos?

Well, my mum thinks...they're both very open-minded. Dad would rather I didn't have them on display when I'm out and about. He doesn't mind, but out respect for him I tend to



cover up. My mum...because they're in South Africa and they are quite behind, but with her she takes pictures of me and emails them to her friends and goes "Look, look at this! This is my daughter!" Almost like a freak show. The only thing she says is "Please don't tattoo your face" and to be honest at this stage of my life I wouldn't go there anyway. Maybe when I'm 70 I might well tattoo my face and do the convention rounds, you know! I don't particularly want my face tattooed, I wear enough make up as it is!★



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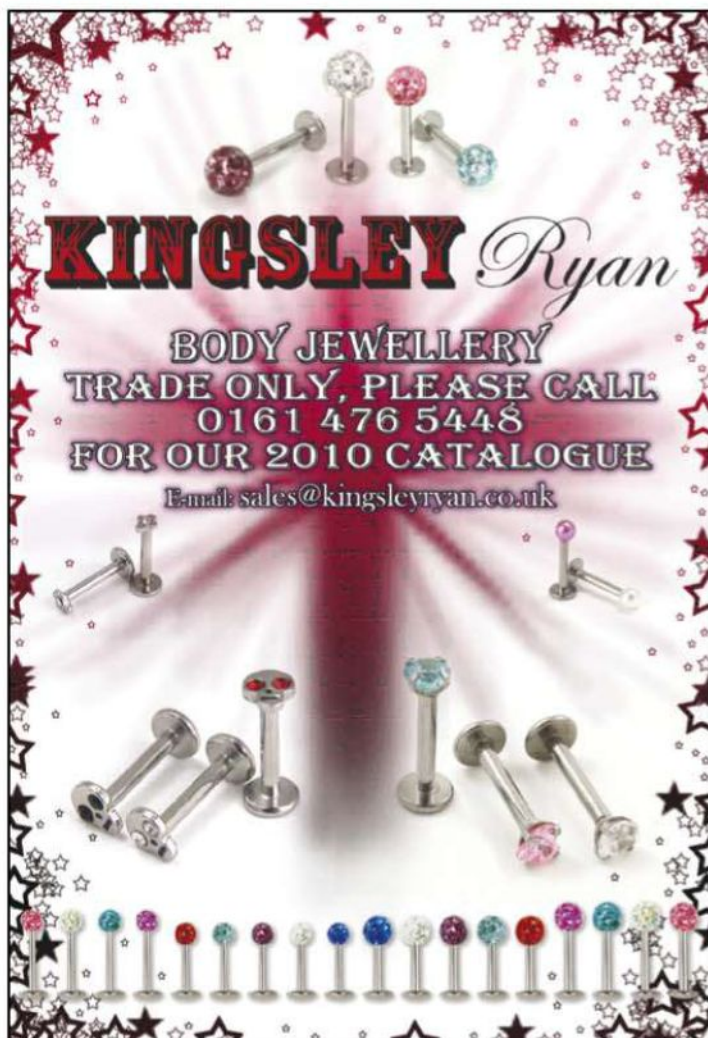
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2ND BOURNEMOUTH INK TATTOO FESTIVAL

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY: NEIL

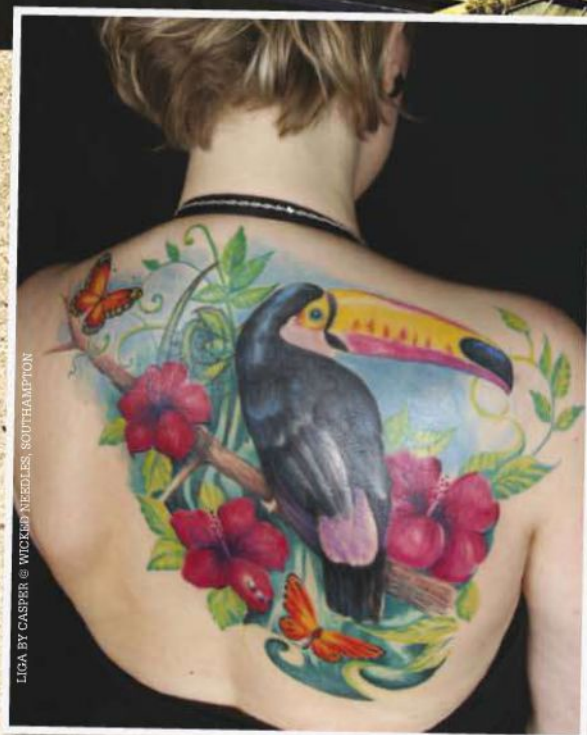
Last year, there was a new show to add to the ever expanding tattoo convention calendar and to be totally honest, I was a little sceptical as to what was going to be 'new and exciting' about this show. Sadly, it clashed with another big show so I sent a Skin Deep Freelancer; Al Overdrive down South to see what all the hoo-ha was about.



BIG JIM © ZOOZ TATTOOS

After a weekend of inky fun and frolics, Al spoke to me at some length and enthused about the friendliness and warm welcome extended to not only him but also everyone that came through the doors. Such was his enthusiasm and the slight change of dates this year; it allowed me to go to the second Bournemouth tattoo convention. I am so glad I did... The Skin Deep towers is a good stone's throw away from the South coast but after a hefty multi-houred drive via Folkestone (Okay, I know, it's in the opposite direction, but I had work to do there), we finally arrived at the hotel and grabbed a well-earned drink. Bournemouth seems to have changed quite a bit since I was last there. It appears to have become a Mecca for the stag and hen party brigade and, as such, it was hard to find a bar or pub that didn't have a bunch of rowdy revellers doing what they do best on stag/hen nights – drinking heavily.

Luckily, the organisers had thought of this and pointed us in the direction of a quieter bar



LIGA BY CASPER © WICKER NEEDLES, SOUTHAMPTON

where many of the artists had congregated prior to the weekend's work.

After the inaugural show, the organisers took the decision to move the show to a bigger and brighter venue – the Bournemouth International Centre seemed perfect for the job of housing close to one hundred and thirty artists and vendor stalls. This sounds like a lot, but there was still plenty of room to meander amongst the tattooists, such was the layout. Traders were in a separate area, many facing the main stage where the burlesque and live music was due to take place over the weekend.

As the opening day appeared, the weather turned from plus twenty degrees on the Friday



EUGENE BY EUGENE @TATTOOZ BY DESIGN, SOUTHAMPTON

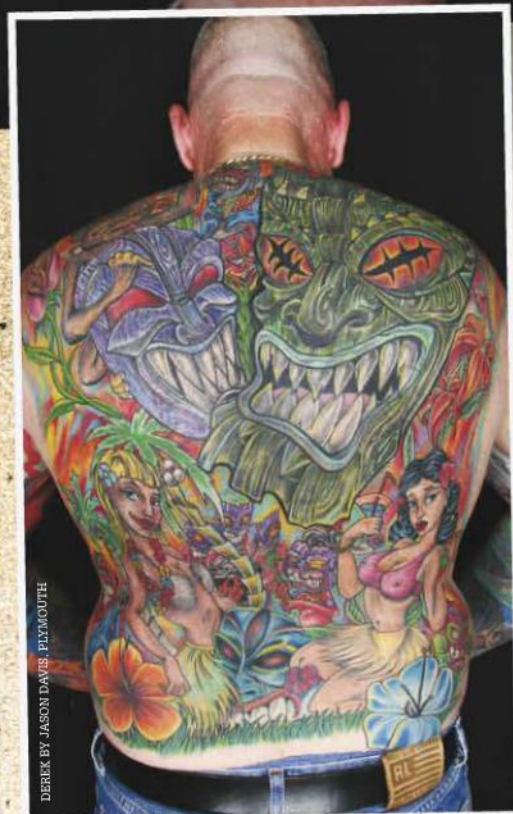


MICHAEL BY STEVE A @ INDELIBLE INK, BOURNEMOUTH



KIERA BY EUGENE @TATTOOZ BY DESIGN, SOUTHAMPTON

Luckily, the organisers had thought of this and pointed us in the direction of a quieter bar where many of the artists had congregated prior to the weekend's work.



DEREK BY JASON DAVE, PLYMOUTH

to torrential rain on the Saturday morning. Luckily we had all our merchandise in situ before the heavens opened. I did feel sorry for the rather large queue assembled outside, waiting to get in and huddled against the outside of the building being battered by the deluge and howling wind, but it wasn't long and the doors were opened and the somewhat damp and steaming public, - quite literally - poured in.

Once the Skin Deep merchandise stand and the photo booth (very kindly situated next to the SD stand) was erected. I took to my heels to go visit some of the guys and girls who were working this weekend. Directly opposite was



Steve had also produced some superb canvases that were to be auctioned off at the end of the weekend with all proceeds going to the Help for Heroes charity.

the one and only Sam Boyce, he of Timeless Ink. This was Sam's local show being spitting distance from his studio in Salisbury. Working with Sam was a young lady by the name of Chantale, freshly landed in the UK having started her tattoo career in Australia and putting out some very nice black and grey tattoos. Chantale is a native Brit and having spent about two and half years tattooing in Sydney, she has recently brought her tattooing talents back to the UK to join forces with Sam.

Whilst talking with some of the other artists, I caught a familiar face in the corner of my eye and took it upon myself to find him and say "Hi". Steve A had a feature in Skin Deep way back in 2005 and I hadn't seen him since then. Not long after the interview, Steve closed his studio and withdrew into the shadows for quite a while and it was a real pleasure to see him out and about again, working from Indelible Ink studio. This quiet and unassuming man has an absolutely incredible talent for both tattoos and drawing and it was a real pleasure to not only speak to him but to see him produce some of his incredible tattoos over the weekend. Steve had also produced some superb canvases that were to be auctioned off at the end of the weekend with all proceeds going to the Help for Heroes charity.

Across from us was the ginger wonder that is Oddboy from Real Art Tattoo in Leicester,



EMMA BY SAM BOYCE @ TIMELESS INK, SALISBURY





EUGENE BY EUGENE @TATTOOZ BY DESIGN, SOUTHAMPTON



CATH BY STEVE POTTON @ STEVES TATTOOS



NICK BY CHANTALE @ TIMELESS INK, SALISBURY

After a brief but busy session in the studio, I took time to go see who and what else was available at Bournemouth Ink.

working hard all weekend and producing a superb chest piece on a young lady with some stunning results. Later he tattooed fellow artist Paul Naylor with an amazing lifelike rendition of one of Paul's sons, which was again, stunning.

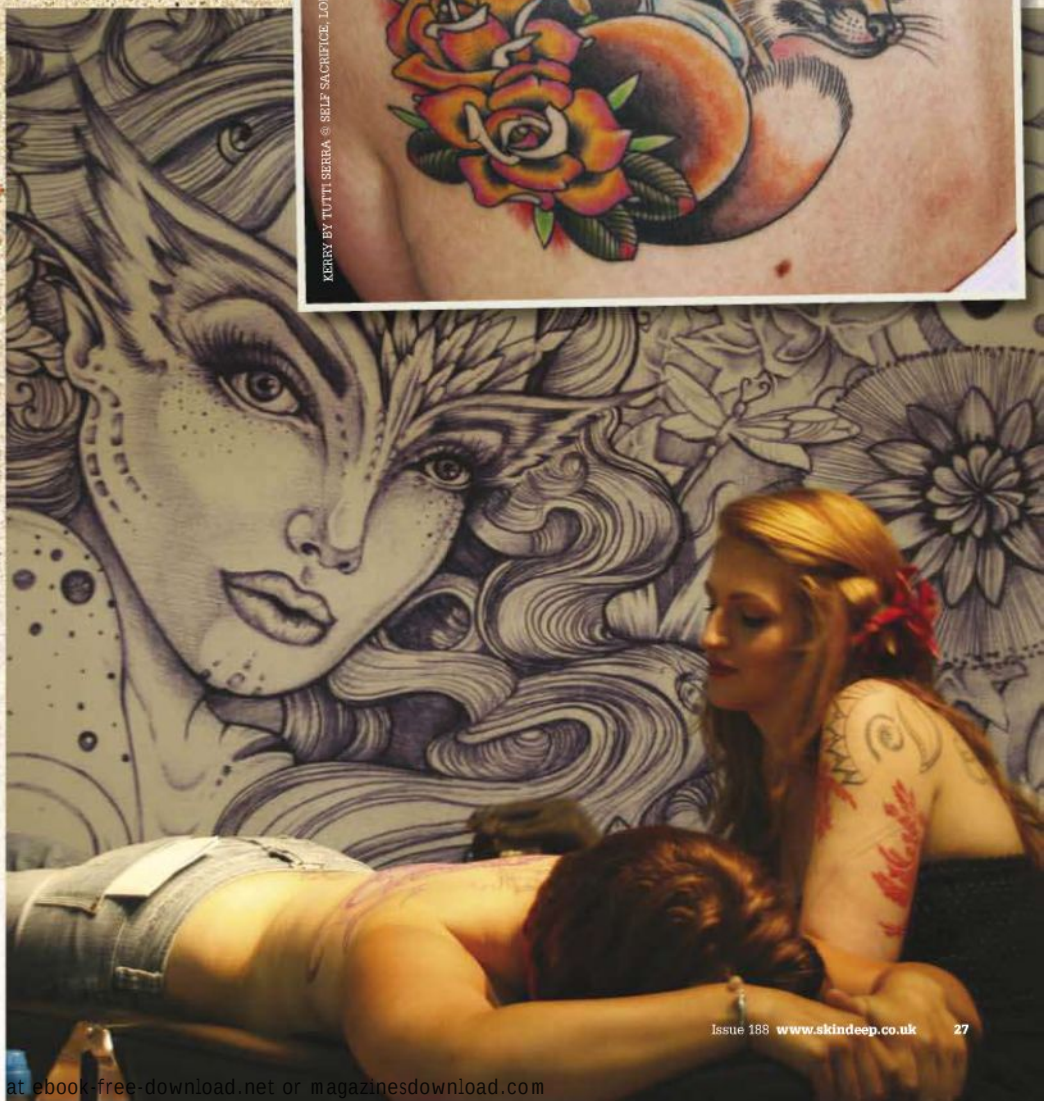
Meanwhile, the venue was well and truly filling up with the public and the hundreds of tattoo machines were starting their busy weekend working hard on producing some great tattoos.

It wasn't too long before I started to get folk come over to chat and get their latest works of art photographed, so out came the trusty old Canon and the flash lights lit up the studio...

After a brief but busy session in the studio, I took time to go see who and what else was available at Bournemouth Ink. Leaving the large, wooden clad dome that was home to the artists, I ventured into the main music area and straight away was hit by a wall of sound coming from the stage. The organisers had pulled out all the stops when it came to the entertainment for the weekend. This included an almost endless line-up of live music acts, interspersed with many, very good burlesque acts including the likes of Miss Polly Rea and her Hurlly Burley Girlie's, who had taken time out of their London West end review to perform on the Saturday. Needless to say, the stage was occupied all weekend by one act or another and this was a good decision, as after walking about the tattoo booths, you need somewhere to sit and chill out and just be entertained, and the line-up of entertainment fitted the bill perfectly. ➡



KERRY BY TUTTI SERRA @ SELF SACRIFICE, LONDON





KAT BY MAGLEK © ASGARD TATTOOS, SOUTHAMPTON

All this walking about and chatting gave me a bit of a thirst so I headed into the bar & food area and was pleasantly surprised to see a very nice display of local art.

Wandering amongst the artwork, pint in hand, was a very nice change and I was more than impressed at the diversity and quality of the exhibits. There were some great tongue-in-cheek statues dressed in gas masks and also mannequins turned into zebra headed creations and skeletons created from a myriad of electrical components. There was some 'traditional' art on display. Also some artwork from some of the tattooists working the show, creating an interesting backdrop to have your lunch or pint to. I do have to say that the beer and food prices were a little on the steep side but I know with big venues, the prices are set by the venue and the organisers have little say over this. Not a criticism, just a comment....

Back in the tattooing area, things had stepped up a notch with pretty much every booth full with tattooists working and folk checking out portfolios, talking to artists or getting undressed in anticipation of their new ink.

There were quite a few old faces dotted about the booths but a very healthy selection

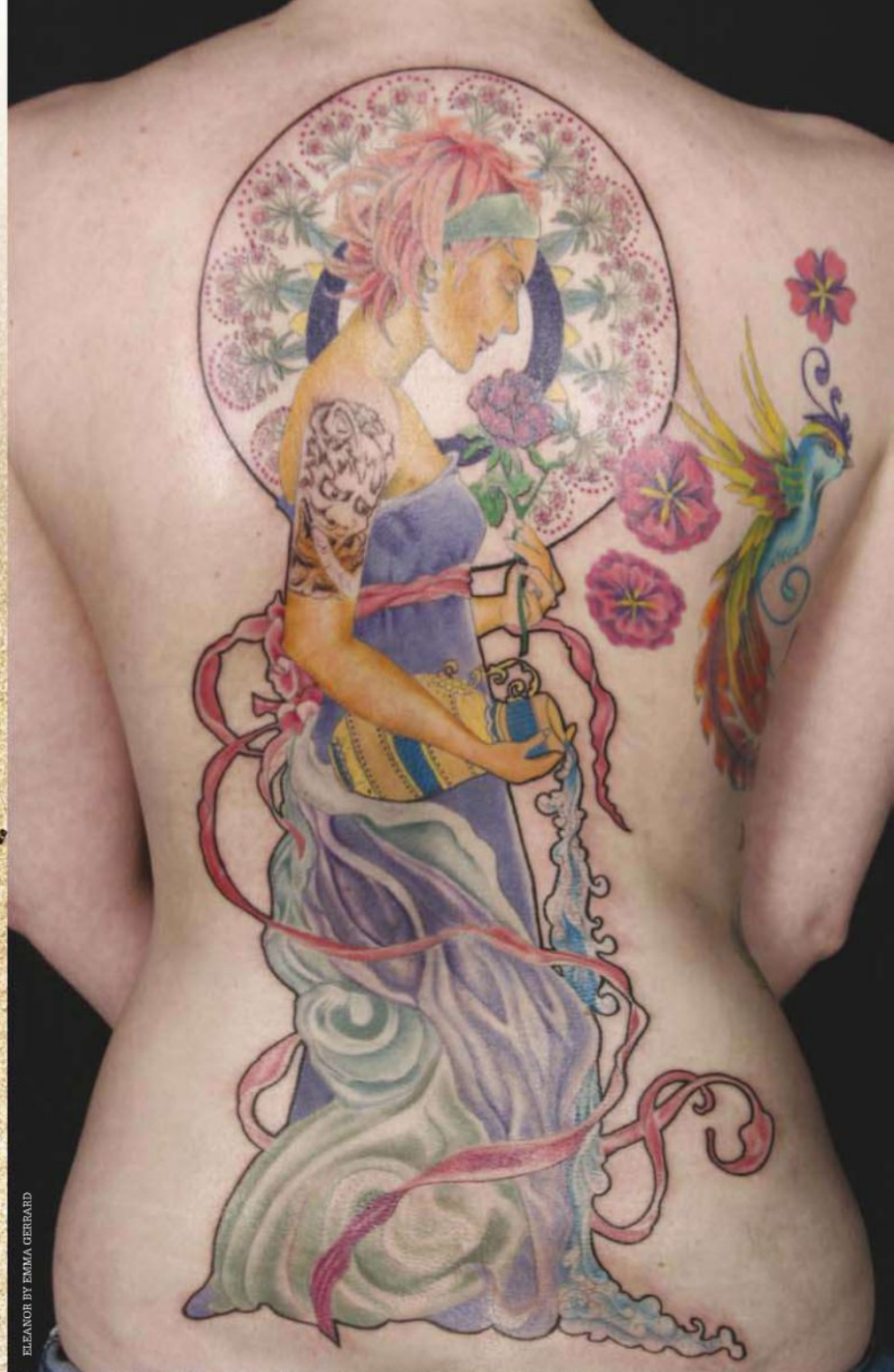
of new artists I'd not seen or heard of before, many making me open my eye wider in appreciation of their work. Being a South Coast show, there was a good selection of local artists, some very good, some not so. It is really hard for organisers to have to vet the quality of artists working a show but I feel if we are to raise the bar, then this needs to be addressed. You will upset some local artists for sure, that may not be the best but isn't the idea of a convention to showcase the best artists you can assemble? Just because you work 'down the road' from the convention, it shouldn't give you automatic right to work it, surely? Saying that, you also have to cater for all tastes of tattooing, from the one-off custom collector to the get a tattoo on a whim person; if this is the case, Bournemouth fitted the bill perfectly.

As the weekend wore on, the sun decided to grace those outside with its presence and

continued to do so for the rest of the weekend, lifting the spirits of those coming in to the show. Obviously all the artists missed the majority of the weather, as they were hard at it, creating masterpieces in skin.

All weekend in the photo booth, the quality of work coming past my lens was to say the least 'amazing'. Sadly there aren't enough pages to showcase all the wonderful tattoos that I shot over the course of the weekend. There's just something about certain shows that seem to ooze good tattoo work, like Manchester, Liverpool and London and I can now add Bournemouth to that list. I was in the process of photographing a young lady's leg with a superb skeletal-inspired piece and the artist came over with her. He asked me if I would like to see some more of his work; I said yes and he promptly dropped his trousers, revealing a lion, a tiger, tattooed amazingly, both of which, it

ELEANOR BY EMMA GERRARD





PAUL BY ODDBOY @ REAL ART, LEICESTER



ZOE BY ODDBOY @ REAL ART, LEICESTER



MAREK BY DAREK @ OUCH TATTOO, LONDON



JAMIE BY SAM BOYCE @ TIMELESS INK, SALISBURY

Still, the competitions got under way and the awards were handed out and I realised that it was fast becoming the end of the weekend.

turns out, he had done himself. Considering he did these upside down and has only been tattooing for two years, I was astounded. (Look out for a feature on this chap in the very near future!) I love it when people just surprise me with work like this.

If electric music and burlesque dancers weren't your thing, you could take in some more genteel music on the acoustic stage and I have to say, as it was directly next to my photo booth, I was serenaded by the dulcet tones of guitars and other instruments blended with the many tattoo machines humming a fine tune all weekend, which was superb. In the main tattoo hall the Amazing Ari wowed the crowds with his aerial feats of trickery and daring do, whilst suspended from two white ribbons. This was a real feat of strength and a visual delight for all.

By now, I had been called to help with the judging and it was erm, a little weird.

Anyone entering the competition had their work photographed, then the two main judges went off into a room and looked at all the entries and did a sort of pre-judge and whittled the entrants down to a short list before the main judging took place. This to me seemed a little strange as how could we (all the judges) agree on the tattoos without actually seeing all the entries?

Still, the competitions got under way and the awards were handed out and I realised that it was fast becoming the end of the weekend. I had a quick wander outside to see what was going on to be greeted by a huge selection of classic cars, lined-up along the 'prom. This really topped off the weekend for me. Not only had I had the most amazing weekend with superb tattoos, amazing tattooists, wonderful stage acts, (including a superb Canadian duo called Monsters of Schlock, who were actually bloody funny), live music and performers, but now I

could wander amongst a selection of stunning machinery from a bygone age. Pure heaven!

I mean, where else can you stroll out of your hotel, roll your trouser legs up and walk to work along the beach, the sun beating down on you with the waves gently washing at your toes? Bournemouth Ink really ticked all the boxes for me and I'm sure for very many others.

The Bournemouth show although only in its second year is proving to be one of those shows not to be missed and speaking the Richard and Ester, they already have more ambitious plans for next years event.

Thanks to all the staff for their tireless efforts to make this convention one to remember.

Why not come and join me next year in Bournemouth for some sun, sea sand and sumptuous skin art - 28th-29th May 2011

My bucket and spade is already packed for next year, I can't wait. ★



TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY: SARAH ANGEL

MICK J

BLUE DRAGON TATTOO, BRIGHTON

It's a drizzly day in the seaside town of Brighton. I struggle down the street with a flailing umbrella against the torrential wind and rain and dive into an unassuming shop in an unassuming street.

Here, I stand in a small empty room with laminate floors and fresh white walls with nothing but a lonely pot plant in the way of adornments and some carefully arranged framed images on the walls. I wait momentarily before a young guy pokes his head around the corner to greet me, and I am ushered down an impossibly tight staircase into the figurative belly of Brighton's Blue Dragon. Waiting patiently in his lair is Mick J, who reservedly and politely shakes my hand and gestures me to take a seat. He's a genial fellow, with a broad smile and faint cockney accent, a jeans and T shirt guy that you could enjoy a pint with down the local.

After ascertaining the all-important information to the all-important question (coffee or tea?), our conversation commences. A conversation that is as long and enlightening as the history the Blue Dragon itself.

Mick's interest in tattooing took hold back in 80s London. "I'm originally from sunny Walthamstow where I started off as a self-taught airbrush artist," he tells me. "My interest in tattooing started when a guy called Terry Oldham opened a tattoo studio just around the corner from me when I was 14. I think I most probably went to his shop more than I went to school and for some unknown reason, after I broke his shop window he let me hang out. It was a very misspent youth," Mick laughs nostalgically.

"There was me and a couple of friends kind of hanging out there at this weird and wonderful place full of teds, skin heads, rockers, punks, you name it, every kind of alternative walk of

life. There were a lot of different cultures; it was the 80s! I played bass in a band... loosely termed, playing bass, I hung it around my neck and as far as I could stretch my arms, that was as low as I could play it! As long as I had my foot on the monitor, I was alright", we laugh inexorably as Mick fondly recalls his punk rock youth. "Then I bought an airbrush and taught myself how to use it and..." Mick's train of thought is broken by the arrival of his trusty tea-bearing apprentice, Dan. "So, the airbrushing thing kinda took off", he resumes. "Ever seen a tobacco tin with a sticker on it? I started that, I produced them for about 5 years through a limited company".

"I was in my late 20's when I started dabbling in bands, the band was my main thing up until that point, we were called The Love Junkies", Mick grins at the thought. "I was a bit of a punk I suppose, we played in a band, and lived the lifestyle, that rock 'n' roll kind of thing. It was a wonderful experience". Despite



Mick's wayward youth, he was drawn back into the world of tattooing when he opened his own art shop, just a street away from where the Blue Dragon stands today. "A wife of a friend of mine was thinking of opening a shop and she said 'whatever you do, don't go to Brighton, it's full of nutters and junkies' so I came down here





THE BLUE DRAGON IS AN OPEN AND HONEST STUDIO WITH A DIVERSE SELECTION OF VIBRANT ARTISTS WHO HAVE BUILT UP A VARIED AND DEDICATED CLIENTÈLE.



and absolutely fell in love with the place!" Before long Mick was being pulled towards the needle thanks to an encounter with one of the resident artists of the Blue Dragon and eventually, Mick was making lasting friendships that were to concrete his involvement with the studio. "I met one of the guys that was a tattooist and also did some airbrushing. We got into conversation and he introduced me to the motley bunch of lads that who asked me if I wanted to come and join the gang! So I worked a while on front of house and was drawing up and before long people I got to know in Brighton offered me skin. After I did that first tattoo..." Mick's expression becomes uncharacteristically serious and he pronounces his words emphatically, "I was absolutely frightened like I've never been frightened before. I walked out of the shop..." he pauses, as if to choose his words as carefully as possible in order to express himself "...two feet off the ground. It was an unbelievable experience and once I'd done one, that was it, I couldn't wait to get in that chair and keep going".

The Blue Dragon is an open and honest studio with a diverse selection of vibrant artists who have built up a varied and dedicated clientèle. Mick has old school beliefs that are paralleled by the old-school swallow tattoos that are fading away on his hands and his team are dedicated to their own methods of working

and have built themselves on a foundation of trust with their customers. "This shop has always been a very approachable shop, 99.9% of the work we do here is custom work, but we do still offer flash. The reason I get up people's noses is because I refuse to take flash out of the shop. It bothers people. I don't know why 'flash' has become a dirty word," Mick ponders. His opinions on flash are steadfast and resolute, "I remember a tattooist came into my shop a few years ago and asked why we were so successful and at the time, Dave Lyeach was tattooing a lady. They were laughing and joking and the music was playing and I said "well, that's why". If you have an attitude, you don't work for the Blue Dragon. If someone walks in and says, 'I want a tattoo', we will discuss it with them and then give them what they want. I refuse to look down my nose at people who want, for the want of a better word, a regular tattoo. I think all tattooists should do a spell in a street shop doing flash because you're thinking on your feet all the time and considering the whole tattoo industry started with flash, how can you say that what actually started it now shouldn't exist?" Mick's honesty and dedication to his working style is endearing and refreshing and he says it with such conviction, that I find myself agreeing with him. 'Jeremy' by Pearl Jam is echoing down the staircase as Mick



continues. "Tattooing didn't come naturally to me, I would class myself as self taught. I had to work hard to get into this shop. The founder of the Blue Dragon was an award-winning artist and he wasn't going to let just anybody in."

The development of Mick's style has been lengthy, and it's clear from analysing the imagery that he produces today, that his work is highly informed by his airbrushing roots. It retains a softness, a looseness and freedom of colour that makes his work come alive. Just one perfectly placed highlight immediately sets a piece alight, bringing it to life with vivacity and realism, but in true Mick J style, he refuses to accept that he has a 'specialty' and instead calls upon his persistent tattooing ideologies to illustrate his point. "I'm an all-rounder", he brazenly states. "That's another dirty word in this industry, "all-rounder", mulls Mick. His varied career has seen him conquer a multitude of different styles and approaches, but it's his current chosen concentration that he is most renowned for. "The tattoos I'm doing now are in a painterly style. It lends itself well to animals, horror and fantasy, which is what I specialised in with airbrushing. I wouldn't say that I specialised in this style now but this is the



kind of path I'm taking because I love doing it. I've always been drawn to animals and horror. Faces and eyes and expression, I suppose. For some reason, when I was airbrushing, I was very good at doing eyes. The biggest reaction I got from painting was when I did eyes. Even if it was a lions face, I would try to get it anatomically correct and the highlights in, but people were seeing it differently. They didn't say, 'oh, that's anatomically correct and the highlights are good', they would say, 'wow,

the eyes are shining, and they're wet!'" Mick's eye tattoos have earned him a great deal of attention and customers have been known to go to him especially for his amazing optical works. His eyes capture an uncanny reality that is expertly realised in amazing detail and lifelike realism. "I like to capture expression with my work, there are no rules, there are no outlines, so you're working within different boundaries, these tattoos are absolute nightmares as sometimes it's not until the last 20 minutes

that it all comes together... when I was airbrushing, I would put one spot of white and I'd be finished, but up until that point it would be like...' will this work?'...I know technically I'm doing it but I enjoy that seat of your pants thing. My outline is the transfer and I'm kind of working from dark to light and then medium and then dark and you're mixing as you go. It's exciting, it's a challenge and I think that's the main thing, I think we all need challenges. I generally work from a photographic reference,👉

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICK'S STYLE HAS BEEN LENGTHY, AND IT'S CLEAR FROM ANALYSING THE IMAGERY THAT HE PRODUCES TODAY, THAT HIS WORK IS HIGHLY INFORMED BY HIS AIRBRUSHING ROOTS.



mainly to get the colours right. I mean, tigers aren't orange, you know? It's about how many different shades there are in that little piece of fur. It's something that I've done with airbrushing so I'm kind of using that knowledge in my painterly style of tattooing." The buzzing of needles begins to rattle down the stairs along with the sound of laughter and commotion. The shop feels alive and communal, and I begin to understand what Mick has been referring to when he speaks of the shop's atmosphere.

At numerous occasions during our conversation Mick has attributed his success and the success of his studio to many other people. "I am thankful to every single person I've ever worked with in the tattoo industry because I've either learnt from them or had the best time with every single one of them. I can't thank the guys here enough; they've taken it to another level." Mick pauses to consider his words carefully as though he is beaming with pride over his prodigal offspring. "We had Jason Ross here, who kind of made us all feed off each other and there's Ben English who was raw talent when he started here, and Jed Harwood, and I get as much pleasure from doing a tattoo I love as I do from seeing them do some work. The way that they have progressed has been absolutely brilliant. My old brother Aaron Soffe, God bless him, I've been working with him for

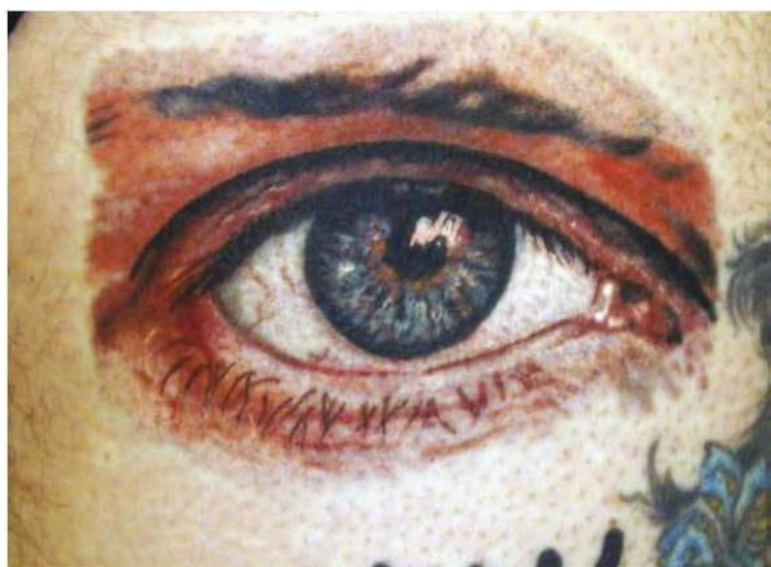


AT NUMEROUS OCCASIONS DURING OUR CONVERSATION MICK HAS ATTRIBUTED HIS SUCCESS AND THE SUCCESS OF HIS STUDIO TO MANY OTHER PEOPLE

ten years on and off and he keeps coming back like a bad smell." laughs Mick.

It's Mick and his gang's refreshing outlook on their practice that makes this studio so interesting, their unashamed and ambivalent attitudes to the rest of their industry, their blatant readiness to reject and flout the contemporary rules that it entails and their willingness to inhabit a sort of sub mainstream positioning within their trade.

"At the end of the day, we draw pretty pictures on people. That's it. We haven't discovered a cure for cancer, that's all we do. We are tattooists" says Mick. His stark and honest words sum up the ethos concisely at this no frills, all skills studio. The Blue Dragon has been a fixture of the Brighton tattoo scene for 21 years, and with a sister studio newly opened in the nearby town of Haywards Heath, it shows no sign of relenting. ★



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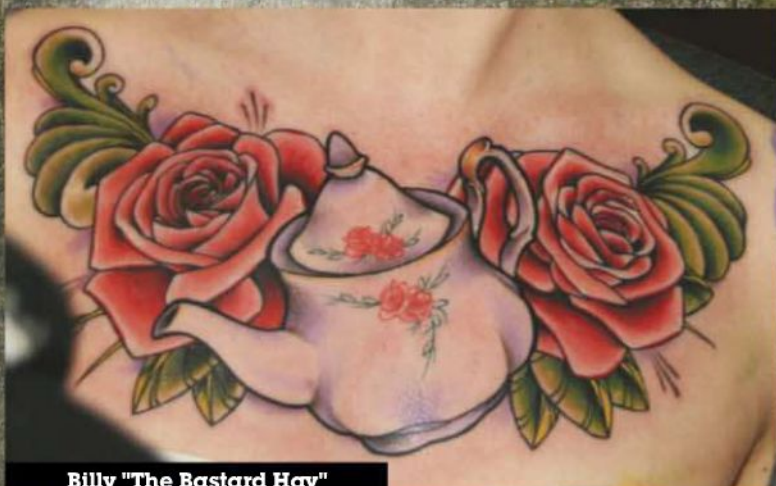
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Street Shop, Lausanne,
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Heaven of Colours, Germany
www.heavenofcolors.de

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Jolie Rogue, London. UK
www.myspace.com/jolierougetattoo

Ray Hunt

Diablo tattoos, Rochester. UK
www.rayhuntingtattoo.com

Remis

Tattoo Prime, Dublin. Ireland
www.remistattoo.com

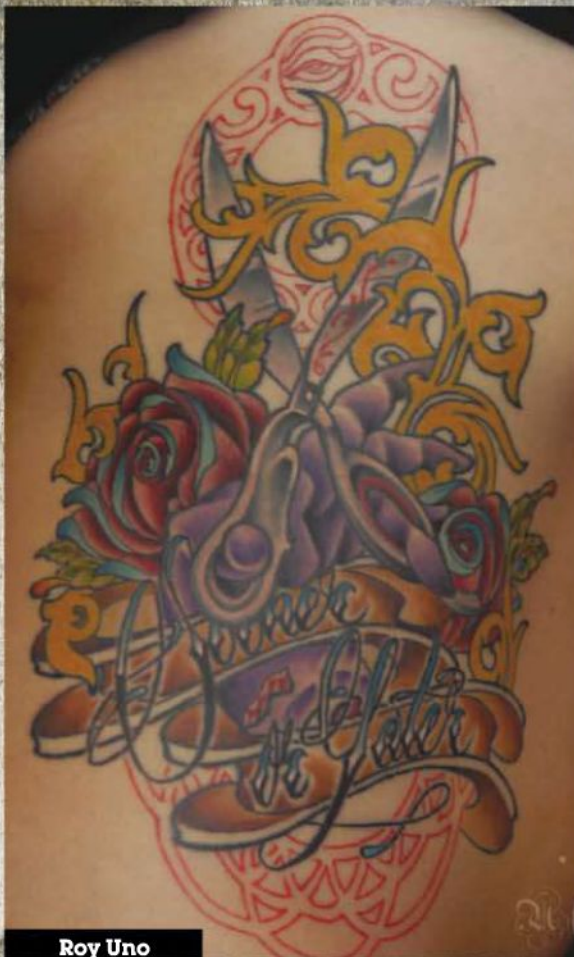
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Richard's, Tattoo Studio,
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London, UK
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INTERVIEW WITH ANDI HOPGOOD

With the overwhelming amount of entries we had for the Hornitos design a tequila bottle competition, sadly, there could only be one winner.

Myself and the other three judges (Hannah Aitchison, Dan Gold, Louis Molloy) had a hard time choosing our favourites as we all had differing views on this. After we had given our decisions to Hornitos, they then had the unenviable task of picking the winner and that lucky person in line for the top prize of £3000 and a chance to see their bottle in the hottest tequila bars in the country was Andi Hopgood of County Durham.

Andi's eye-catching and Mexican-inspired Day of the Dead/Old School roses design came out as the winner.

I caught up with Andi to ask her a little about her inspiration and most importantly, what she was going to do with the winnings! Andi is a tattooist and has been so for many years, so she is well placed to come up with the design. Andi and her husband own and run Geko Images Tattoo Studio in County Durham.

Firstly, congratulations on the winning design. How did you feel when Hornitos called to say you had won?

I haven't really sunk in to be honest. I assumed that I had missed the announcement of the winner and thought, that's it, I'll see what else I can play around with.

When Hornitos informed me that I had won, I thought I'd misheard them but now I know, I'm so pleased and it was a lovely surprise!

So what made you enter the competition?

My husband and I were joking on what we would spend the money on and I said "either a Harley or a holiday". I was just thumbing through Skin Deep magazine and I saw the competition and thought, "that's different, I'll have a go at that".

We were so amazed at not only the amount of entries but the sheer quality of designs, which were amazing.

I really liked the Hornitos idea of a bottle design, it beats doing the usual t-shirt or poster design competitions.

What was your inspiration behind the design of your bottle?

I absolutely love sugar skulls because they are so nice and bright and colourful and whenever anyone says to me "Mexico", I automatically think of the Day of the Dead celebrations.

Have you ever been to Mexico?
No, I'd love to go.

Well you have the money now! Your winning design will be on the shelves in the hottest tequila bars in the autumn, how do you think you will feel to walk into a bar with the possibility of seeing your bottle design on the shelf?

I'd be quite proud of myself to be honest.

How did you start with the design and what sort of things did you take into account before starting?

I looked at the shape of the bottle and thought that you are going to want something that looks good from across a crowded bar for all angles but not too over the top so that it isn't too confusing. I love the Old Skool style and roses too, so I combined both aspects

**WINNER
ANDI HOPGOOD**



together. I also wanted the design to have that "Oh, that looks like a tattoo design" and wanted to bring that tattoo element into the bottle.

If you decided to spend the money on new tattoos, who would be the artists that you would go to for some new ink?

Oh, I'd have a huge list! To be honest, I really love Hannah Aitchison's work; it is amazing. I like Brandon Bond (USA), David Bolt (USA), Andy Shou (Thailand) and Filip Leu (Switzerland). I love colourful work these days and would like to get tattooed from all of the aforementioned artists.

What's your preferred method of consuming tequila

I don't drink at all. I even had to ask my daughter what tequila tasted like

The winning bottle will also be on display at this year's Tattoo Jam in Doncaster racecourse at the Artist friDAY, Tattoo Masters' Ball.

www.tattoojam.co.uk



You can still view the amazing entries on the **drINK HORNITOS** competition home page:

www.bigtattooplanet.com/hornitos

Kylee Kross

Nicole Raneri is a hot tattooed tomboy with an obsession for fix gear bikes and a love of all things dark, dank and downright satanic. Sound cool? She is. But that's not the persona most are familiar with...

Her alter-ego - the legendary Burning Angel model and performer Kylee Kross - is renowned for being one of the first heavily inked women to grace our screens as a porn star, transforming the face of the industry and paving the way for hundreds of girls to follow in her footsteps. Newly based in London, the pair are fighting it out to pursue conflicting ideals: Nicole wants to play with bikes and learn mechanics, and Kylee is eager to bare all in her latest feature length, *Crushing on Kylee*. We talk to the real Ms Kross about sex, love, traditional tattoos and riding dirty...





WE'RE INTERVIEWING YOU TODAY AS NICOLE BUT YOU'RE BETTER KNOWN AS BEING BURNING ANGEL'S KYLEE KROSS. HOW'S THAT WORKING OUT? ARE YOU STILL PERFORMING?

Yeah, I'm still doing that stuff. Before I moved here I was down in LA working on a pretty big movie that just came out this week. It's called Bartenders and it's like a Coyote Ugly spoof, which is pretty much four crazy trouble-making girls working at a bar, starting problems and drinking lots and having a lot of sex. And I was also working on the last few scenes of my new movie, which is coming out in October. It's going to be called Crushing on Kylee and it's my first movie where I got to call the shots and say what I wanted to do.

DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TO BE A CERTAIN TYPE OF PERSON TO WORK IN PORN?

It's really cliché, but I started stripping when I was 17 and I continued this up until about two years ago. I guess I'd always been comfortable being naked, and it never crossed my mind. Now it takes a really strong person to do it, because of all the bullshit you have to deal with. Not having relationships... I mean it takes a really special person to date somebody that does what I do.

ARE YOU DATING A SPECIAL PERSON?

Oh yeah...

HOW DOES THAT WORK OUT? DO YOU HAVE MORE RULES NOW THAT YOU'RE WITH HIM?

No, that's what's so amazing about him. He's the first person I've ever been with that lets me make my own decisions. He's with me because he loves me, and he's kind of sticking it out to see what happens. I don't throw anything in his face. We don't watch it. We don't talk about it. I don't run around town going "Hey I'm Kylee, nice to meet you..." I make sure I'm Nicole, and I have a separate life, and this just happens to be what I do for a living.



I opened the door for a lot of girls who wanted to be part of these movies, but weren't really getting any work. That's why I do it.

IT MUST BE QUITE HARD TO IGNORE SUCH A BIG PART OF YOUR LIFE ALL THE TIME...

I don't know. I can't stand the signings and meet-and-greets, and everybody knowing who you are. That's not why I continued doing this. I continued doing it because I happened to like it. I might not have been the hottest girl doing this, but for some reason everyone fucking liked me and I was doing better than the girl in front of me or the girl behind me. Girls that look like me say all the time "Oh I was the first alt-porn star. I was the first girl with tattoos." But they were not. I was one of the first. I opened the door for a lot of girls who wanted to be part of these movies, but weren't really getting any work. That's why I do it.

WHAT DOES NICOLE LIKE TO DO?

Nicole's a vegan and she likes to rescue animals. She rides a bike like a fucking dude. She hangs out with her boyfriend. She's really into art. Nicole has dirty fingernails and doesn't wear dresses and doesn't wear make up and has bruises and scratches over her legs and works in a bike shop and is kind of like a tomboy, you know?

TATTOOED CHICKS AND MOTORBIKES ARE WHAT PEOPLE COMMONLY ASSOCIATED TOGETHER, TATTOOS AND BICYCLES NOT SO MUCH...

It's funny because I was on facebook.com and someone had posted a picture of a girl covered in tattoos that was riding a fixed gear bike. It's weird. I'm pretty deep in the fix scene, and there are not a lot of girls that are as covered in tattoos as me. All the kids that hang around here, none of them have tattoos.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR TATTOOS AND HOW YOU STARTED COLLECTING...

I've been working in tattoo shops since I was 15 years old. My whole family have tattoos. None of them as extreme as I, but it's always been something that I've grown up seeing and I knew really young that I wanted to get tattoos. The first one I got was when my Grandpa took me to this shitty street shop on South Beach in Florida and I got this tribal sun on the back of my neck with my astrological sign in the middle of it. I would never get rid of it in a million years. Then I got the cliché nautical stars on my stomach. Then I started doing this Japanese stuff on my arm, which is my oldest.

I love traditional tattoos because I know they're going to look just as good 30 years from now.

visible tattoo. And then I started going nuts. I was getting tattooed once a month. Working in shops, not getting paid, just getting tattooed.

WHAT KIND OF SHOPS WERE YOU WORKING IN?

I worked at this street shop called Fun House for a year. From there I went to Hole Addiction and I apprenticed there to pierce. I pierced there for a year, then I went over to Bruce Bart which is a pretty well-known shop in Florida, pierced there. Then to Atlanta, Salt Lake City, moved to New York and the last tattoo shop I worked in was for Bert Krak. He still owns Top Shelf, and I worked there for almost two years. That was the most amazing experience because some of my favourite tattoos came from there.

WHICH ONES ARE YOUR FAVOURITE?

I have a whole arm covered in stuff by Bert Krak. He did my hands: the old Sailor Jerry flash for sweet and sour babies. He did my birds. I have work by Dave Fox. I went down to Miami Ink and got a piece by Ami James. Eli Quinters is doing my thighs, which are not finished yet. Simon (Edge) has tattooed a Ben Folds tattoo on me – it's our favourite song. And I love the Burzum tattoo in the inverted cross too. My best tattoos are on my legs because I started those last.

DO THINK IT'S ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO BE UNIQUE WITH YOUR TATTOO DESIGNS OR IS TRADITIONAL BETTER?

Personally, I love traditional tattoos because I know they're going to look just as good 30 years from now. There's more of a story behind it too. I do have some new school stuff and some neo traditional stuff, but I think if I'd had known what I know now back then, I would probably have just had them all black and traditional.

IN THE SAME WAY, WHAT RULES SHOULD PEOPLE FOLLOW WHEN GETTING TATTOOS?

For a first tattoo I think it's better to start somewhere where it's not visible to make sure you know what you're going to be doing. I see a lot of people nowadays who have absolutely no tattoos getting their hands done, the sides of their necks... Fuck I was covered before I got my neck tattooed. It's kind of like a rite of passage. You have to earn it. And these kids are trying to outdo each other. I'm fucking 26 years old. Thank God I have another hobby otherwise what would I do for a living? Just fucking think about it before you make that decision. ★

To keep up to date with Kylee, you can read her blog here :
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GILLINGHAM

TATTOO CONVENTION

Everybody has their favourite shows during the year, whether it's working or just visiting, and the reasons for this are as plentiful as the number of shows themselves. Some like big international events where they can get the chance to get some tattoo work done by an artist from overseas, others like local shows and so on...but what actually makes a good convention?

Is it because it's super busy? Or because it's on the doorstep or could it just possibly be something else entirely... when I first started doing conventions way back in the early nineties there were only a handful during the year, which all led up to the famed Dunstable expo at the end of the summer. At this time all of the shows had one thing in common...



everyone was part of a big extended family, it was like a family and friends reunion. Over the years a lot of this has been lost and more and more shows these days are a commercial venture, as long as the organisers make their money from the tattoo booths, the traders and punters through the door, they don't really give a toss about anything else...however there are still a few shows that aren't like that, that are not put on for financial gain but for a chance for like-minded people and friends to get together and have a good time. As long as the organisers have covered the cost of putting on the event they are happy, one show such as this is Gillingham.

This year saw Gillingham's 10th anniversary, on the 30th & 31st May, and to mark the occasion there was a pre convention fancy dress party on the Saturday night. unfortunately I couldn't make the Saturday night, but from what I heard and the photos I saw, a good night was had by all.

I got down to Gillingham on the Sunday morning and got everything set up before going around to see who was there. As I walked round I was also thinking that it didn't seem possible that 10 years had passed since the first time I had walked round that hall, where the hell has the time gone? I was brought back to reality when I heard the sound of a machine start up... it was still nearly



AMBER BY BEN SHAW @ MEDWAY TATTOO

an hour prior to the doors opening, I went to investigate...it was Emma Kierzek from Aurora Tattoo making an early start on what was going to be a fairly large piece. Emma's a lovely person and she seems to get really nice customers as well; who could ask for more than that? After stopping to have a quick chat to a few more people (sometimes my work is so hard!) the doors were open and the hall started to fill up with people keen and eager to look round or have some work done. It wasn't long before pretty much everyone was working



PINKY BY LEIGH OLDORIN @ COSMIC TATTOO, COLCHESTER



JAMES BY SCOTT BANKS @ CLASSIC INK, HEENE BAY



DAVE BY BRENDAN MUDD @ INKFISH STUDIOS, MAIDSTONE



DONNA BY ANDY ELAIR @ SKINFLX TATTOO MAIDSTONE



PERRY BY AARON BURTON @ COSMIC TATTOO COLCHESTER

Emma's a lovely person and she seems to get really nice customers as well; who could ask for more than that?

and I got to start picking out some people to photograph. After a fairly productive afternoon which seemed to zoom by, the hall started to empty out and slowly people started to close down for the night. This meant it was time to book into my room, have a quick freshen up and go down to the bar and restaurant to have something to eat and a couple of drinks, just to be sociable, you understand. This is also a good time to be able to sit and chat, which ended up with me and Andy Blair reminiscing about the good ol' days, haha.... anyone would think we were in our 80s if they'd heard us. With any show there are always a few people who are the life and soul of the party, and this night was no different. There was some poor bloke who'd had one too many and fallen asleep in a chair in the bar, with the remains of his kebab next to him on the table. I'm not gonna name anyone but someone thought the pitta bread would make him a good hat,☺





EMILY BY BEN SHAW @ MEDWAY TATTOO, GILLINGHAM



MARK BY LUGH OLDICORN @ COSMIC TATTOO, COLCHESTER



ELLEN BY DANI LACEY @ TATTOO MEDWAY

I know how hard it is to judge and believe me this was a difficult call in several categories.

didn't they, M... It's a shame I didn't have a camera with me, but it was funny. I knew that the next day was going to be busy, so I had a reasonably early night.

The King Charles hotel where the convention is held has gone through a series of upgrades over the years and this year was no exception, they've had new bathrooms put in every room and more work done in the main breakfast dining room. I wonder how it'll look in another ten years?

I was up and doing my shoot early the next morning in the new patio garden in the hotel, the weather wasn't great but at least it wasn't too cold or raining. By the time the doors opened at 12 noon everybody was champing at the bit and within half an hour I was busy in the studio, I must say that the standard of work coming through was superb, there was so much good new work it was hard to keep up with it all, luckily as with previous years, the judging was being done in the same room as my studio space so I managed to capture most of the people I wanted but hadn't got during the judging, I think the amount of people entering the competitions was down a bit this year as was the attendance, but that may have been because the Bournemouth show was on the same weekend, which was a bit naughty of them as Gillingham has had this weekend for years...never the less there was still a good number in every category and I know for



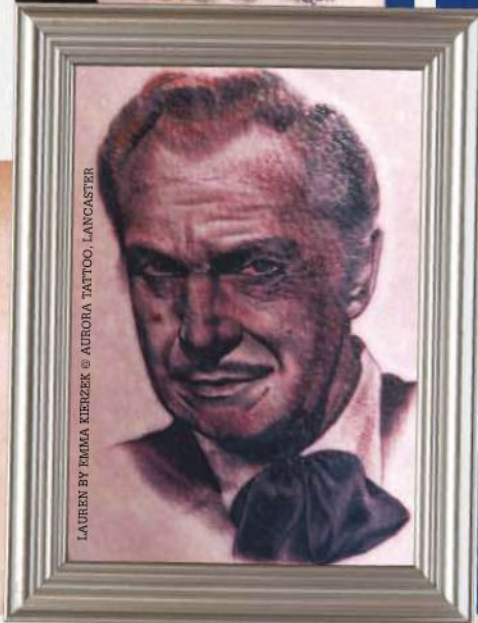
GARETH BY AARON BURTON @ COSMIC TATTOO, COLCHESTER



KATE BY SEAN SPARKS @ MERLIN TATTOO, DOVER



LES BY ANDY ELAR @ SKINFIX TATTOO, MAIDSTONE



LAUREN BY EMMA KIERZEK @ AURORA TATTOO, LANCASTER



MARK BY GARETH WILLIAMS @ GARETH'S TATTOOS, MEDWAY III

a fact that in some cases there was literally only one or two points separating the top two or three. I know how hard it is to judge and believe me this was a difficult call in several categories. Also the judges here have a really good rapport both with each other and sometimes taking the rise out of the contestants. It's just another aspect of the fun and friendly nature of this show.

After the main judging there was a break for an hour or so before the judging for the best of show, which gave the artists a bit more time to finish pieces they were still working on and for me to grab a few last people I'd missed earlier. As the judging for best of show started so did a band on the main stage, I managed to get the last couple of people who'd just had work finished and then catch some of the band. I must apologise here as I don't get their name but they were a superb ska cover band,



doing a mixture of all sorts including Madness and Bad Manners. They finished with a great cover of Madness's Night Boat To Cairo, and the girl on saxophone was spot on. It was then time for the award ceremony and there were trophies for both artist and collector. Once the awards were given out people started to drift off home, apart from the real party animals, who then retired to the bar to start all over again.

There has been a rumour going around after last year's show that this, the 10th, would be the last one, well I'm very happy to report that is isn't the case and the Gillingham show will be back at the Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May 2011 so don't miss it. I'd like to extend my thanks to Paul

& Jan, Darren the "HULK" Stares (sorry Daz) and all the guys and gals who help put another great weekend together. ★

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

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@ INKFISH STUDIOS, MAIDSTONE

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GLYNN BY JOHN TREHARNE
@ SKIN CREATIONS, CARDIFF

LARGE COLOUR MALE

PERRY BY AARON BURTON
@ COSMIC TATTOO, COLCHESTER

LARGE COLOUR FEMALE

SAM BY SCOTT HANSLER
@ KINGSTON INK, PORTSMOUTH

SMALL COLOUR MALE

DICKY BY AARON BURTON
@ COSMIC TATTOO, COLCHESTER

SMALL COLOUR FEMALE

PINKY BY LEIGH OLD CORN
@ COSMIC TATTOO, COLCHESTER

LARGE B/G

RICHARD BY J.B. STEVENS
@ INKFISH STUDIOS, MAIDSTONE

SMALL B/G MALE

MARK BY LEIGH OLD CORN
@ COSMIC TATTOO, COLCHESTER

SMALL B/G FEMALE

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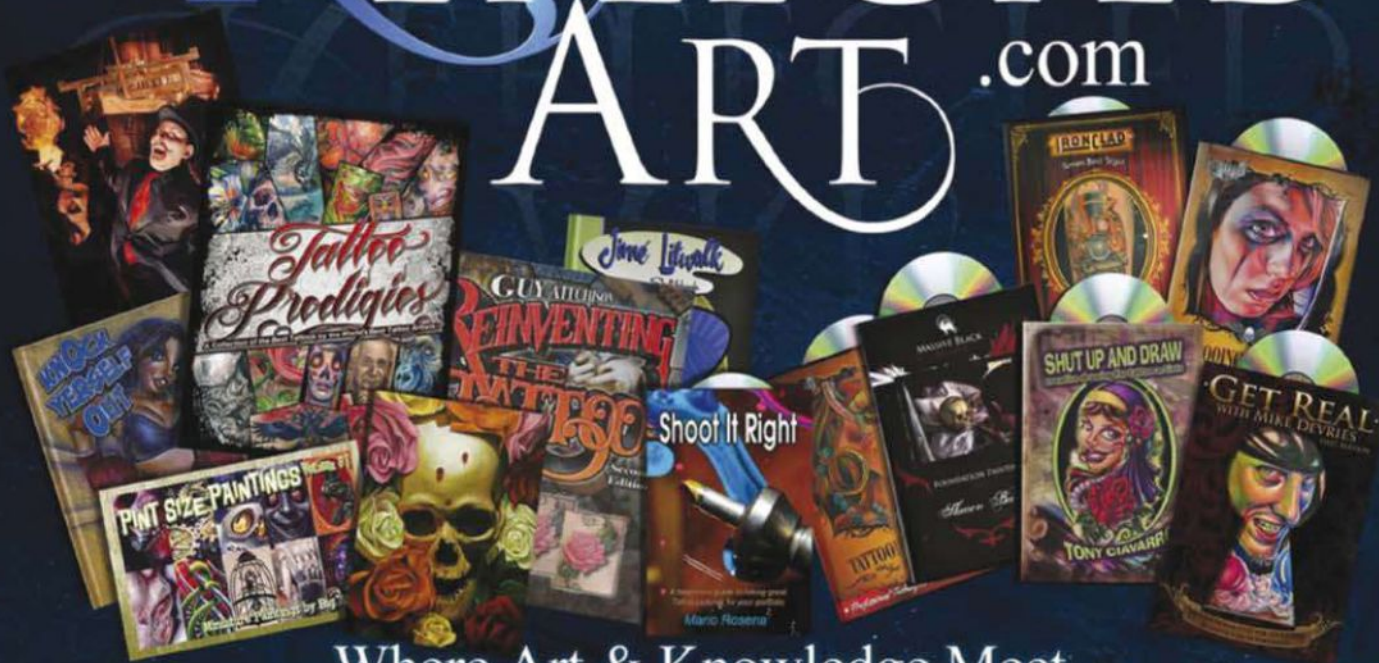
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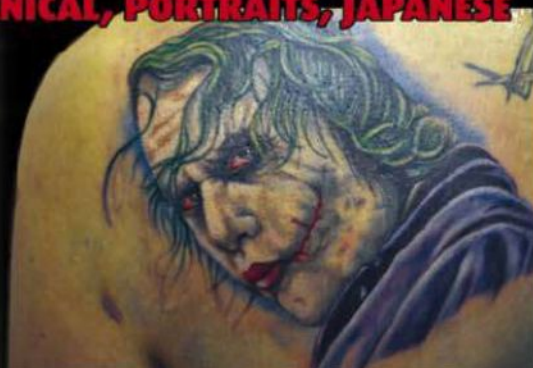
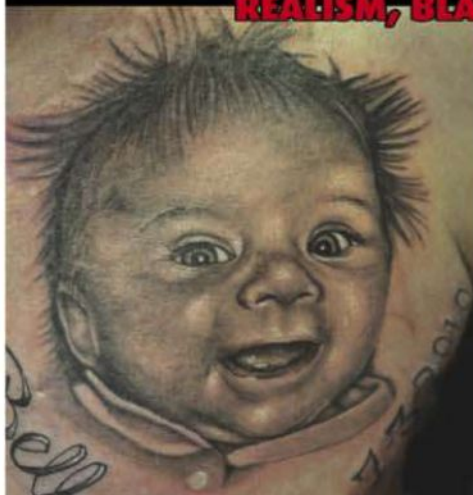
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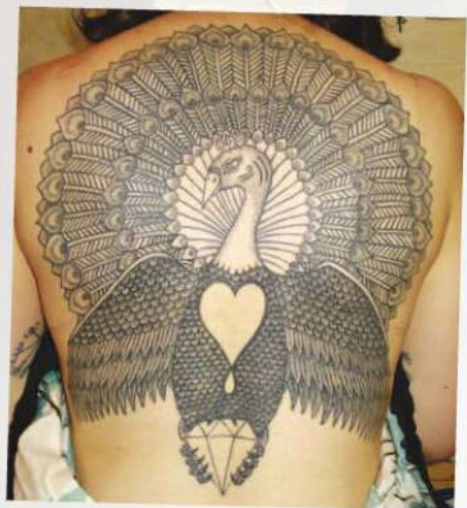
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DIVINE CANVAS BESPOKE TATTOOING

In recent years, there has been an resurgence of tattoos done by the traditional methods in Europe; i.e. by hand, with a needle attached to a stick or rod.



One exponent of this age-old craft is a chap who has spent his formative years under the tutelage of one Xed LeHead. Now with a pedigree like that, who can fail to go wrong?

The talented work you see before you belongs to one Boff Konkerz from Divine Canvas bespoke tattooing in London. Boff had been designing tattoos for more than a decade before having an epiphany one evening and decided that tattooing was to be his destiny. From that evening on, Boff hasn't looked back and is now firmly ensconced at Divine Canvas passing on his hand-poked, traditional tattooing talents to all.

LET'S START WITH A BIT OF HISTORY. WHAT ARE YOUR EARLIEST MEMORIES OF TATTOOS? WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START TATTOOING? WHEN DID YOU START AND WHERE?

I have always been fascinated by tattoos, even though I knew no tattooed people when growing up. My earliest memories would be seeing tattooed people at the swimming baths at Butlins in Skegness on summer holiday in the late seventies. I knew from an early age that I would be heavily tattooed and as a child would seek out images of tattoos wherever I could. This was not easy back then. I had a picture from a Guinness Book of Records of Rusty Skuse that I was very pleased with and a black and white photo of a Japanese bodysuit that I ripped out of

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AT THIS POINT LUCKY WAS ALREADY TATTOOED COMPLETELY BLACK, SO WE LOOKED FOR A LIGHT SPOT AND I TATTOOED A SMALL BUDDHIST SWASTIKA ON HIS LEG

DID TATTOOING COME EASILY TO YOU FROM THE OFF?

I had a 15-year gap between starting to draw tattoo designs and actually tattooing, so I didn't rush into things. But once I began hand-poking tattoos things seemed to flow fairly naturally.

DID YOU GET AN APPRENTICESHIP OR WERE YOU SELF-TAUGHT?

I had been tattooed a few times by my good friend Xed LeHead and we were actually sharing a house in North London when I decided I wanted to learn how to tattoo without a machine. I had already had two small eight pointed stars hand poked on my hands by Xed and when Xed did them I knew it was something I was interested in learning to do. I was working in a pub in Camden Town at the time and I decided on the way home from work one night to ask Xed to give me some advice on getting started. When I arrived home Xed wasn't in, but Lucky Diamond Rich was; Lucky also lived with us at the time. I told Lucky that I was gonna ask Xed for some advice and Lucky said there was no time like the present, showed me how to make a hand tool and let me tattoo him there and then. At this point Lucky was already tattooed completely black, so we found a light spot on his leg and

I tattooed a small Buddhist swastika on him. So I actually did my first tattoo on the most tattooed man in the world! After that I did a couple of tattoos on myself, showed them to friends and straight away people wanted me to tattoo them. One of my first customers was Iestyn Flye, who's now the piercer/body modification artist at Divine Canvas.

WHAT'S THE ATMOSPHERE AND AMBIENCE LIKE IN THE STUDIO?

It's great to be working at Divine Canvas; we have a real eclectic mix of personalities and styles. Everyone knows Xed's work, his sense of humour and his legendary timekeeping, but everyone on the team brings something to the table. Gem Love is a laid-back, rock and roll geezer who produces great Japanese and Old School work, Damien Voodoo is a unique character in the tattoo world who has a passion for dot shaded pin-ups with an urban twist, Eric Blanc is a talented painter and illustrator who can turn his hand to anything- a real draughtsman. Then we have Iestyn Flye doing all manner of piercing and extreme body modification. And of course we have Mad Alan, with his uncompromising anti-tattooing and larger than life persona. ☺

an old encyclopaedia. In the early eighties a picture of a heavily tattooed person was a rare find, this being before the Internet and even tattoo magazines. I remember buying my first tattoo magazine around 1988. I got my first tattoo from Paul Green at the Monster Shop in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire in 1990. It was a small Celtic design, now covered, that I came up with myself. From then on I designed all my own tattoos and started drawing things up for friends. It just seemed the natural thing to do, to get a unique piece rather than something off the wall.

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOUR INTEREST IN TATTOOS AND TATTOOING COMES FROM?

It comes from deep down and way back.



HAVE YOU WORKED AT MANY CONVENTIONS?

I worked my first convention at Bournemouth Ink in May this year. I really enjoyed it and am looking forward to doing more of them. Due to the unusual nature of my work I had quite an audience while I was tattooing. Many people told me they had never seen a tattoo applied this way, well, now they have!

WHO ARE YOUR MAIN INFLUENCES, INCLUDING BOTH TATTOOISTS AND THE MORE TRADITIONAL ARTISTS?

Xed LeHead is my biggest influence; both as an artist but also in the way he approaches tattooing. I also like Yann Black, Duncan X... too many to mention really. As for traditional artists... I like the Mexican artist Jose Guadalupe Posada, his Day of the Dead artwork is much more striking than the comic book versions we see in tattoos at the moment... rougher and darker. I also like folk art from India and China. I am an avid reader of independent comics, particularly the work of Los Bros Hernandez and Charles Burns, and I get a lot out of the way these artists use only black ink to achieve stunning results.



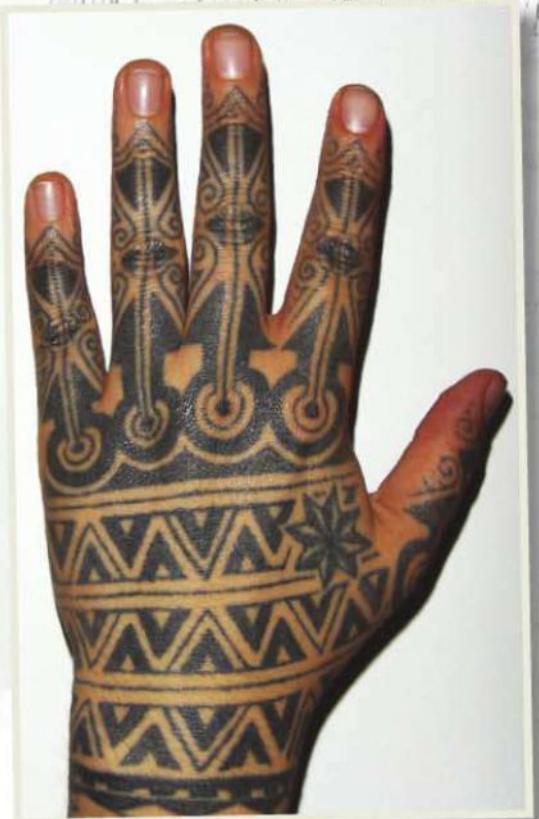
DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE STYLE OF TATTOOING? CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR OWN STYLE?

I see myself as having a technique rather than a style. I mainly work with black ink and I use dot shading a lot. I like to tackle any kind of design using hand tools; often a customer comes to me with an idea or design and I'll tweak it a bit so it works by hand. I've recently completed a sleeve of Jose Pasada-style skeletons and I'm working on a large thigh piece in a similar style featuring a skeletal double bass player. I'd

like to do more of this kind of thing in the future, but I also enjoy doing the abstract, neo-tribal and geometric stuff.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT YOUR CHOSEN AREA OF EXPERTISE THAT YOU ENJOY SO MUCH? WHY WERE YOU DRAWN TO IT?

It's a rare and special thing. It's slower, and this is no bad thing in today's quick fix, fast food culture. It has soul and is deeply connected with our collective past. The energy exchange is direct between tattooist and client, no electricity. I'm not manipulating an external energy source; I'm just pushing that ink in myself. It's the difference between riding a horse and driving a car. It's about the journey as much as the destination and not



WE CAN NITPICK ALL DAY OVER THIS FACET OR THAT. ARGUE ABOUT THE “GOOD OLD DAYS” OR WHATEVER, BUT THE SIMPLE UNDENIABLE FACT IS THAT TATTOOING IS WINNING, IT’S GROWING AND IT’S ALIVE

just how quick you get from A to B. Having said that, there's something very forward looking in what I do as a few years ago, the tattoo industry was too small to support someone as niche as me.

I'm also very interested in the reductive nature of the way I work. Even though I'm only using a needle lashed to a stick and black ink, the amount of potential tattoos which could be applied this way is infinite, the same as the amount of potential tattoos which could be applied using all the colours in existence and every machine known to man.

WHAT WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE TATTOO FOR YOU TO CREATE? WHAT SUBJECT MATTER/PLACEMENT/TECHNIQUES WOULD YOU USE?

I'm very fond of tattooing hands and would be happy to spend the rest of my days just tattooing that part of the body. I tattooed my own hands very early on in my career, including tattooing my right hand with my left (I'm right handed). There's something about it which suits handwork. Hands are small enough that the relatively slow process of

tattooing without a machine means it doesn't take too long to cover a hand. Also the ink goes into the fingers really well and never blows. Tattooing a full hand by hand is the ultimate mano a mano.

WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE ON WHAT YOU WILL AND WON'T TATTOO?

If it's not going to look good I won't do it. I'm not in it for the money, I'm in it for the art. I won't do a tattoo I don't want to do just to take money off someone. If I were that kind of guy I wouldn't be working by hand. I wouldn't tattoo anything Nazi/fascist on anyone, but I don't think anyone would come to me for that kind of work.

DO YOU WORK IN ANY OTHER MEDIUMS, E.G. SCULPTURE, PAINTING? DO THESE PURSUITS INFLUENCE YOUR TATTOOING WORK AT ALL?

I only really draw within the context of creating tattoo designs. I've always done music, I sing and write songs for and electro band called Ape Sex And The Fear. There's no direct link to tattooing, but it's all about creativity, self-expression and individuality.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF BEING AN ARTIST?

Being paid for my work rather than working for pay. Being challenged daily, seeing myself grow as an artist... it's all good!

DO YOU HAVE ANY AMBITIONS IN EITHER THE TATTOOING INDUSTRY OR OTHERWISE?

Just to keep on keeping on, enjoying my time at Divine Canvas and meeting and tattooing lots of interesting folk. I'm also planning on replacing the obsolete monetary system with a resource-based economy, but these things take time.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY CHANGES IN THE TATTOO INDUSTRY THAT WORRY OR CONCERN YOU?

No, the more the merrier as far as I'm concerned. Bring it on!

IS THERE ANYBODY YOU WOULD LIKE TO THANK FOR HELPING YOU OVER THE YEARS?

Xed, all the people I've tattooed in the past and the ones I'm going to tattoo in the future. And Bungle.

IS THERE ANY OTHER INFORMATION THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

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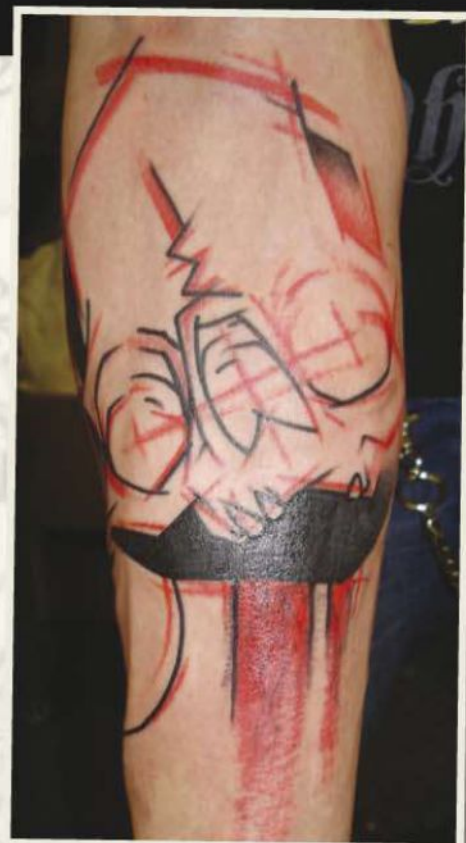
AN ARTIST ON THE ROAD...

I first met Mark whilst he was working at the Brighton show this year and I was pleasantly surprised at his style of tattooing and artwork.

Interestingly, Mark has clearly had some influences from the current school of graphical tattoos combined with realism and colour work that are in the spotlight these days. Guys like Simone and Volko from Buena Vista Tattoo Club and Lionel Fahy have set new trends on this path but Mark has forged his own distinct style with his graphical and often 'tongue in cheek' tattoo style.

OK, FILL US IN ON WHAT YOUR EARLIEST MEMORIES OF TATTOOS ARE? WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START TATTOOING AND WHEN DID YOU START AND WHERE?

Already at the age of 4, I started drawing; it always inspired me to draw three-dimensional pictures. Tattooing is for me a high form of art, giving each piece a unique approach. It all started about a year and a half ago for me in a little studio in Belgium, close to the German/Dutch border. A friend of mine taught me all I had to know in a relatively short time.





THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE STUDIOS I HAVE WORKED IN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY WHACKY AND LOTS OF FUN. I LOVE MY WORK AND THIS ATMOSPHERE INSPIRES THE PEOPLE WHO COME TO OUR STUDIO.

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOUR INTEREST IN TATTOOS AND TATTOOING COMES FROM? DO YOU THINK IT WAS SOMETHING THAT YOU MAY HAVE BEEN BORN TO?

I don't really know exactly, I have always loved to sketch and create something which is always an original and that will leave an individual footprint.

AT WHAT AGE DID YOU GET YOUR FIRST TATTOO AND BY WHOM?

My first tattoo I got quite late in life at the Bregenz-Tattoo Convention. Tommy Lee was the artist, and it brought tears to my mother's eyes. Guil Zekril introduced me to the wonderful tattoos of Tommy Lee at the opening of his tattoo studio.

WHEN YOU EVENTUALLY PICKED UP A TATTOO MACHINE; HOW HARD WAS IT TO TRY AND TRANSFER WHAT YOU HAD BEEN DOING ON PAPER AND CANVAS TO SKIN?

The actual tattooing was easy for me but getting started wasn't that easy. I started studying graphic design but my heart wasn't in it. I spent all my spare time drawing abstract tattoos. My best friend gave me the money to

get my first tattoo machine etc. and then I took off from there. I gave up graphic design and started tattooing.

I have not done an apprenticeship. A friend of mine put me in contact with a tattoo designer who runs a tattoo studio on the Isle of Sylt, a small German island. So I packed my suitcase and went to Sylt. In the coming weeks, he taught me so much and I designed my first tattoos there.

Then I jobbed at the Talisman Tattoo Studio to help expand my knowledge in this field by tattooing friends of mine and at the same time, continue my studies. This was a great time, as I could work on both my passions, the art and tattooing. Six months later, I realised that tattooing was my real passion and from then on I devoted my entire focus on this area.

YOU WERE VERY LUCKY TO GET A FOOT INTO THE DOOR, SO TO SPEAK, BUT DO YOU THINK AN APPRENTICESHIP IS THE BEST WAY TO LEARN THE BUSINESS?

Well like I mentioned before, I myself have not completed an apprenticeship. In my opinion good tattooing is a combination of

two components; the technical proficiency of technical aspects and the other component is the passion for art. You can learn the theory and some technical skills in an apprenticeship, but you can't learn passion. This is something you either have or don't have. I learnt a lot from Guil Zekril and Frank Dietzel.

WHAT'S THE ATMOSPHERE AND AMBIENCE LIKE WHERE YOU WORK?

The atmosphere in the studios I have worked for have always been very whacky and lots of fun. I love my work and I find that this atmosphere inspires the people who come to our studio.

HAVE YOU WORKED AT MANY CONVENTIONS?

Yes I have worked at a lot of conventions and I learn so much at each one. You meet so many interesting people and create your own network existing of all kind of artists and interesting personalities. Sometimes I also have a new tattoo done.

Those who are interested in extraordinary tattooing are very interested in my work at the shows and love to check out my sketch folder ➡

with various motifs. As I mentioned before I love to have a unique footprint and this is to be seen when you see my work.

You also have those kinds of people who are only interested in mass tattooing, like stars, they tend to move on pretty quickly.

DID YOU PICK UP ANY ADDITIONAL TIPS AND TRICKS FROM THE ARTISTS WORKING AT THE CONVENTIONS?

Well yes, sure, even if it is just a new idea which is triggered by talking or watching artists working. That is the good thing about conventions.

HAVE YOU WORKED OVERSEAS AT ALL AND DO YOU FIND THAT CERTAIN STYLES ARE PREVALENT DEPENDING ON WHEREABOUTS YOU ARE?

I frequently travel abroad and also visit many exhibitions in foreign countries. I would say so, as every country has its own culture and fashion. So based on this you do notice different trends. In general one could say that the French people are more open for crazy motifs and designs and the Germans like old school!

In my experience England is very welcoming to tattoos as the British people have a cool attitude in terms of "live and let live".

HAVE YOU HAD ANY KIND OF FORMAL ART TRAINING AND DO YOU THINK THAT FORMAL ART TRAINING IS BENEFICIAL TO A TATTOOIST?

Absolutely! I would say that this is one of the key success factors. With art training you are able to put every motif "into place". It can though also slow you down, if you can't let go and let thoughts flow. This depends on your own attitude what you make out of your apprenticeship, art studies or education.

WHO WOULD YOU CITE AS YOUR MAIN INFLUENCES, INCLUDING BOTH TATTOOISTS AND THE MORE TRADITIONAL ARTISTS?

I am very impressed and influenced by the work of Wim Delvoye.

He makes crazy things like tattooing pigs. He has a really cool attitude as he does what he wants to do and not what is commercial. French and Belgian tattooists also inspire me a lot as they have taught me to be open-minded for new and crazy ways of working.

As to my own style, I like to create abstract motifs. It can even look a bit child-like, as I don't like to stick to benchmarks. My aim is to create something special and unique by letting my thoughts inspire me. Sometimes this is not the easiest way, but it is my way. I like to work in a crazy way, choosing motives that nobody else would even think of using. I have chosen say, shopping bags, "holy" toast or a sunflower with teeth! I also like to experiment with different kinds of techniques. Creativity has no borders and with experimenting you can define and develop new styles or ways and suddenly it can turn into a trend. Maybe one day, even a benchmark.

HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT DESIGNING A TATTOO? WHAT PROCESSES DO YOU GO THROUGH TO GET FROM THE INITIAL IDEA TO THE FINALISED DESIGN?

I do not have a specific pattern. Creativity is like I mentioned, infinite or unlimited in my mind.



I LIKE TO WORK IN A CRAZY WAY, CHOOSING MOTIVES THAT NOBODY ELSE WOULD EVEN THINK OF USING. I HAVE CHOSEN SAY, SHOPPING BAGS, "HOLY" TOAST OR A SUNFLOWER WITH TEETH!

There are many methods which lead to good results. I keep a sketchbook with each tattoo design I have made and these I take along to exhibitions. These sketches often inspire my clients and lead to new ideas for tattoos.

And at the same time I also have another sketchbook, which is not related to tattoos. That way I keep a specific independence and open-minded attitude. At the same time my subconscious is always working on solutions how new ideas or even techniques can be designed or developed.

WHAT WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE TATTOO FOR YOU TO CREATE? WHAT SUBJECT MATTER/PLACEMENT/ TECHNIQUES WOULD YOU USE?

Wow, that is a very interesting question, something I have never thought about yet. Well if

a client would have total trust in me and wanted to have a huge tattoo, I think I would create something that would only exist of one - or at the most, two subjects - it would be asymmetric and would involve the entire body. No other tattoo should be involved as this could demolish the harmony completely. I would even consider developing different needles and creating new tattooing methods. Have I triggered your interest? Then contact me please!

WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE ON WHAT YOU WILL AND WON'T TATTOO?

Today, I would draw the line - in my opinion - with stupid ideas. With designs that just do not fit to my style. I also draw a clear line when it comes to the first tattoo somebody wants to have done. Regardless of what they are doing



for a living I do not place the first tattoo in visible areas such as hands, face or on the neck. It does not matter how much money they are willing to pay, this is a "no no" thing for me.

HOW DO YOU SPEND TIME AWAY FROM TATTOOING?

For me relaxation comes with drawing. It can happen that I can fill an entire sketch book within two weeks with all kind of new designs; this can become an addiction. I also love to work on my Vespa scooter and in future may be even on a Lambretta. I like to meet with my best friend and with friends I have met in this business. Well I love everything that creates fun!

WHO HAS TATTOOED YOU?

I have a tattoo from Tommy Lee Wendtner, Guil Zerkil and Little Swastika and one from Paul Acker.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER ARTISTS THAT YOU'RE PLANNING TO GET WORK FROM?

Yeah, I have planned quite a lot. I hope to be completely "coloured" one day, a kind of a "collection book" of various artists, but not only

with tattoos but also with kind of a picture screen from the various artists. This is a dream I have.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BEING A TATTOO ARTIST?

It's just cool. Being independent and being able to create art which inspires and motivates me. Of course this often involves a lot of time. I think it is great if you can earn your living by making your hobby into your business. I get to travel to foreign countries, meet interesting people and this pushes me to develop my horizons and to never rest. That is my motto.

DO YOU HAVE ANY AMBITIONS IN EITHER THE TATTOOING INDUSTRY OR OTHERWISE?

In a few years time I would love to have my own shop, which will be more like a kind of art gallery. Not a street shop. On only one day in a week I will take appointments and the rest of the week I will fully concentrate on doing the tattoos. That way I achieve the best results. The shop will be located in a suburb, so no walk-in customers but clients who are really seeking for this specific kind of art. Something of course, I will first have to work hard for!

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY CHANGES IN THE TATTOO INDUSTRY THAT WORRY OR CONCERN YOU?

Well like in any kind of business, you have some people, who just want to make a lot of money, regardless of what they are doing. Tattoo business is booming and therefore you find tonnes of new tattoo colours and other items on the market. This I find irritating at times as some artists are sponsored and used to push brands and products – to increase sales and make money.

IS THERE ANYBODY YOU FEEL DESERVES SOME CREDIT FOR HELPING YOU OVER THE YEARS?

Oh, definitely. I would with all my heart thank my family and my best friend Matias. Matias inspired me to go down this path. I want to thank Guil Zerkil for the reincarnation. My thanks also go out to Frank Dietzel and Xandi from "Nadelwerk" and Sven from "Scratchers Paradise" and Sabiene Jacobs from "Talisman Tattoo". All these extraordinary people have constantly helped and supported me a lot.

I would also like to thank you for this interview and the chance to express openly my thoughts and opinions. See you soon at Tattoo Jam! ★

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INTERVIEW NEIL
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DARWIN ENRIQUEZ

When people ask me to name countries where tattoos are popular and places where you can see many great tattoo works; my mind goes places like, Japan, America, New Zealand, Borneo, but one place that would be last on my list of countries producing great tattoos is Venezuela.



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I'D JUST RECOMMEND EVERYONE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU CAN LEARN SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE ELSE, BUT YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO FIND THE WAY TO LEARN EXTRA THINGS BY YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES SO THAT YOU CAN COME TO YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS AND REACH YOUR OWN STYLE EVENTUALLY

difficult but persevered by himself with little guidance to help him forge his new career. He is not arrogant enough to think that he knows it all and even now, Darwin freely admits that "everyday I learn a little more about the process of tattooing".

Having climbed over the countless hurdles standing in the way of new tattooists, he says about apprenticeships; "I'd just recommend everyone to keep in mind that you can always learn something from someone else, but you always have to find the way to learn extra things by your own experiences; so that you can come to your own conclusions and reach your own style eventually".

Having mastered the multi-complexities of tattooing, Darwin is turning his obvious talents to painting but he freely admits that he doesn't know everything about the art of painting, so he is happily taking tuition and is currently learning to paint, which I'm sure will yield some amazing results soon.

Darwin isn't one to sit back in his comfy studio. No, he likes to pack up his trusty tattoo machines and travel the world, visiting many, many different countries to gain new experiences and to meet other tattooists. Working these foreign shows, he says; "I love to work at foreign tattoo conventions as I find I pick up lots of new tips and tricks that eventually help me to improve my tattooing skills and to pass on my new skills to my customers. Every one wins from these situations, myself, as I expand my knowledge and the customers as they get an even better tattoo from me. I found that in Belgium, my work was very well received as they tend to go for the more black and grey work as well as Polynesian tattoos, so they seemed keen to see my style of colour tattooing. Back in South America, people tend to go for the more colourful type of tattoos."

Darwin has also noticed that whilst travelling, especially through Europe; that there are more tattoo organisations that try to help their fellow tattooists to improve. ☺

One man who is single-handedly putting his country on the tattooing map is Darwin Enriquez. Darwin's colour tattoos have a certain painterly, even watercolour look about them with his perfect blend of shading using a tonal range that is flawless.

Whilst at school, Darwin seems to have taken to art effortlessly and soon he found himself drawing tattoo-inspired designs from books and magazines and eventually ending up putting together many designs for his local tattoo studio; Tattoo Gallery.

It was a forgone conclusion that he would end up getting some ink himself and at the ripe old age of nineteen, Darwin succumbed to the tattooist's needle and got his first tattoo. The tattoo was, as you would imagine, designed by himself and expertly applied by a chap called Javier Maestre.

As with many tattooed folk, he got the bug, got tattooed more and eventually whilst designing tattoos for friends and studios, he decided that it might be a nice progression to pick up a tattoo machine himself to see what the fuss was all about. After all, Darwin took the view that tattooing was just "drawing on people" but very quickly realised that the process was far more involved than he initially thought. He found the process quite





He says, "Tattooing is far more organised over here (Europe)."

When I asked him about his influences he wasn't too sure and didn't name any specific artists, but he was certain that it wasn't just tattooists; "I like to take artistic inspiration from everywhere, nature, architecture, animals, everything really! I feel that my tattooing has gone through some distinct phases and I really don't want to stifle the creative process that happens in my head by sticking to one style."

When asked about his style and whether he thought he had one or consciously aimed to do a specific tattoo, he was quite certain that: "I still don't think I have a style to be honest. I like realism as you can see in my work, but I have noticed that in contrast to other tattooing styles like Japanese and say, new school styles, which are designed for the skin, realism needs to be mixed with other techniques for the tattoo to last longer and pass the test of time."

Looking at his work, you can see that he has taken this into account on many of his tattoos. Look at the beer glass on these pages to see that Darwin has thought long and hard about





“PHOTOGRAPHY HAS INFLUENCED MY PAINTING AND TATTOOING HEAVILY. I FIND THIS HELPS ME UNDERSTAND THE WAY THAT LIGHT WORKS ON DIFFERENT SURFACES AND THE WAY IT MAKES CERTAIN AREAS LOOK EITHER IN OR OUT OF FOCUS.”

the froth coming from the glass and has added colours that the average tattoo collector might not see in the original image. Cecil Porter from California is another artist that tends to ‘see’ colours that aren’t there but after the finished piece is done, these ‘hidden’ colours, when added, just make the tattoo stand out even more. Whether this is a learnt talent or just one that has been perfected by the artists themselves over time, I don’t know. All I do know is that it makes these guys just that little bit more special from other tattooists.

When having a consultation with his clients, Darwin likes to talk about the proposed design and asks for lots of reference material and ideas but he tries not to make a ‘carbon copy’ of a drawing or photo; he likes to add his slant on the idea to help make the pieces and true one-off for the customer. Darwin cites photography as one of his other passions. “Photography has influenced my painting and tattooing heavily. I find this helps me understand the way that light works on different surfaces and the way it makes certain areas look either in or out of focus. To me looking for this sort of thing helps my work massively.” When asked about his favourite part of being an artists he freely admits that: “I like the fact that you can give expression

to your art into someone else’s skin for ever, it means a lot that people trust me to tattoo them”.

To finish up the interview, Darwin just wanted to add; “tattooing is a very intense profession and sometimes it is easy to forget your family and friends around you, so I want to thank all those who have helped me get where I am today”.

If you like the look of Darwin’s tattoo work, you can catch him at the UK’s biggest tattoo convention in Doncaster, Tattoo Jam. www.tattoojam.co.uk ★



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I am Mohammed, people call me Mo. I am 23, black, short hair, brown eyes, 5'9" tall, slim build, mixed race guy. I have about 10 tattoos on my body. If any one would like to write to me they can do so at: Mohammed Saeed, A0B15AN, HMP Coldingley, Bisley, Woking, Surrey. GU24 9EX (188)

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28 y/o lightly tattooed (getting more) 6'4" white male seeking female pen pal. 24-35 (multi tattoos and piercings). Willing to relocate in future. Write to: Greg Arndt 379068, PO Box 900, Sturtavent, WI, 53177, USA (187)

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I am a 26 year-old male living in the west Yorkshire area. I have worked in a well-established tattoo studio, as an apprentice and now that I'm fully trained I'm looking for a more responsible role. I have a natural artistic ability, so I tend to do lots of free hand tattoos and original artwork. I specialise in realistic black and gray work but do enjoy colour work and the more traditional tattoos. I see myself as a very polite, responsible, friendly and hard working individual. I have no drug/alcohol problems. I have a Full UK driving license and I am willing to travel for work. My Portfolio is available at request. Any interest/ inquiries please do not hesitate to contact. Luke Williamson 07394714653 Lukewilliamson_design@hotmail.com (188)

Hi my name is Glen Pollitt, I'm looking for a tattooing apprenticeship somewhere in the Manchester area I'm currently in my last year of the army and so would only be able to come into shop at weekends but I'm a keen artist and love tattooing and want to make this my life. I am a fast learner and with spending the last 6 years in the army I am a very positive and a good worker. I'm currently working on my portfolio but what little I have I'm more than willing to travel to show my work if you are interested please e-mail me at glenpollitt@hotmail.com or phone me on 07805659381 (188)

My name is Claire, I am 29 years old and I am looking for a position/ apprenticeship in a tattoo studio in the south Wales area. I currently live near Swansea, but am willing to travel. I have a passion for art and tattoos and I have excellent drawing skills. I consider myself to be bright, reliable, honest, imaginative and hardworking. I would love the opportunity to finally achieve my life-long dream of becoming a tattoo artist. No drug/drink problems, just loads of enthusiasm. Please contact: Claire on 07977144300 or claire.evs@hotmail.com (188)

Hi, I am looking to gain some studio experience as either a receptionist or a trainee piercer. I have been piercing myself and others for a while now and would love to make a full time job of it. The piercings I have been doing have been fairly basic so would love for the opportunity to train under someone with the experience to help me progress to a professional level. I'm 27 and definitely have my head on my shoulders. I'm located in East Sussex, so anywhere within a reasonable travel distance would be ideal. If you have been thinking of taking on someone new, please feel free to contact me. Email me at monkey82@hotmail.co.uk Phone 07956655811 (188)

Hi my name is Julie. I have recently moved to north west London and I am desperately seeking an apprenticeship / position in a tattoo studio. I am a qualified body piercer and I am a member of the British Body Piercing Association. I have a portfolio of my piercing and tattooing work. I have worked in a shop environment drawing out designs for the tattooists, stencils, booking appointments and cleaning the studio, tips and grips setting up and braking down equipment. I have no drug / alcohol attitude problems and I get on well with people. I have a good sense of humor but can get on with my work. I enjoy a shop environment and have a friendly but professional manner with customers. I am willing to start at the bottom and learn this trade. If you can help please call me on 07970 770 903 / 020 8964 0183 or email juliemacink@hotmail.co.uk (188)

Hi my name is Felicia. I currently reside in Hampshire and I am looking for a tattoo apprenticeship/position preferably whilst also working as body piercer in the same tattoo studio. I have 4 years studio experience as a fully qualified body piercer and have been voluntarily been helping the tattooists by drawing up designs, setting up the stations before each tattoo. I have a portfolio of my piercings and drawings that I have done over the years. I have no drink/drug related problems and I have a good sense of humour but also have the serious side needed in order to give good advice and a professional service. I am very dedicated to this profession and I intend to work very hard in order to become a tattooist. If

you are interested please contact me on:
feliciablue27@yahoo.co.uk (186)

JOBS OFFERED

Tattoo and body piercing studio Wickedneedles in Southampton city centre is looking for professional body piercer. Experience in all type of piercings, micro dermal anchors and high standards necessary.

Please apply via email:
evo@wickedneedles.com
Tel: 02380238839 (188)

Ouch Tattoo in West London is looking for a unique individual to join our team, must have a strong portfolio of tattoo work and drawings, and be able to do custom and walk ins at our busy studios. Would be beneficial if you can pierce but not essential, no ego's and a positive attitude to fit in with our outstanding team. It is a full time position available end of august when our very own Craigy Lee will be moving to Australia! pop into one of our studios with your portfolio or contact: www.ouchtattoo.co.uk, 0208 840 7717, info@ouchtattoo.co.uk (188)

Wanted, a qualified tattoo artist to fill a full time position at our studio in Camden. Applicants should be in a position to apply for a local license, through the local council in order to work at our studio. Please contact Marlene. 0207-284 4247 (188)

Tattoo artist required for Shoreline Tattoo, St Ives Cornwall. We are one of the busiest custom studios in Cornwall, therefore we are looking for an artist with a strong portfolio of tattoos and artwork, a good attitude to work and people, and a love of homemade cake. Studio experience would be preferable. No apprentices. Please contact us at shorelinetattoo@hotmail.com or www.myspace.com/shorelinetattoo (188)

Apprentice wanted for shop in Ilford Essex. Must be a great artist and have good communication talking to customers please. Send some of your art work with your name and contact number to Viperstudio, 91 Green Lanes Ilford Essex IG1 1XL please do not call by phone. (188)

Busy Hertfordshire Studio requires an extra set of hands, in the form of a part time tattoo artist (with a possibility of going full time). This person will be a good all rounder, with a good portfolio, tattooing professionally for at least 3 yrs, with previous shop experience. Must be friendly and speak fluent English. Scratchers or beginners NEED NOT APPLY. All applicants should apply initially to info@badgirlinktattoos.com (188)

Dragonheart Tattoo UK ltd will soon be looking to expand therefore require another tattoo artist with a minimum of three years studio experience and a studio apprentice with an outstanding portfolio to join our talented team on the "crazy train" Applicants must not have any drink or attitude problems. Please contact Russ on: 01316573831 email: russ@dragonhearttattoo.co.uk or pop in to 260 Portobello, High Street, Edinburgh, www.dragonhearttattoo.co.uk (188)

I'm a custom tattooist based in Buckinghamshire, with my own private

studio, and I'm looking on sharing the space as there's plenty of room, and I really miss bouncing off other artists. You would need your own client base, as there's no passing trade. Very cheap rent rate to the right person. Although outside London, it's on the Met tube line, close to M25, airport etc, so in an ideal location. Any interest, please contact me at the studio. 01494 721295 (japanesetattooing.co.uk). Thanks, Hayley. (187)

A well-established, busy studio in South East Essex is offering a full time position. We are looking for a female artist who is experienced, has a strong portfolio and works well in a team. No apprentices or scratchers! Please contact Serah on 01702 300067 (187)

Retro Rebels, Aberdeen is looking for an additional artist, must have portfolio and studio experience contact HYPERLINK "x-msg://61/michelle@retrorebels.co.uk"michelle@retrorebels.co.uk Also Retro Rebels requires a full time piercer to start end of June, must have studio experience and references. (187)

Retro Rebels, Aberdeen is looking for an additional artist, must have portfolio and studio experience. Retro Rebels, Aberdeen also requires a full time body piercer to start end of June, must have studio experience and references contact HYPERLINK "x-msg://143/michelle@retrorebels.co.uk"michelle@retrorebels.co.uk, 01224 635793 (187)

FOR SALE

Busy Est Tattoo Business for sale in the Derbyshire area, due to relocation. Precinct location. Large 2 floor studio to house multiple artists and large waiting room. Further rooms above, suitable for extra studio or piercing room with separate large waiting room. Negotiable lease. Low rent at £375 per calendar month, property qualifies for small business rates relief. Enquiries by email only - lee1138@hotmail.co.uk (188)

ESTABLISHED BUSY TATTOO & BODY PIERCING STUDIO FOR SALE. Situated just outside of Coventry city centre in a busy shopping area, fully fitted / equipped modern and pleasant styled and furnished studio. Large Shop/ reception area with reception desk, sofa. Large Flash collection, two jewellery display cabinets. Separate large treatment room with two workstations. Separate clean room, Toilet, drawing Area, Photo copier, 42" plasma screen fitted, Large amount of jewellery. Low rent for area. This is a busy popular studio only selling due to leaving the country. Priced for quick sale at £40,000 you can more than make that back in the first year. Possible Owner financing over a two year period, for details please email shaun.weir@hotmail.com or call 07787249343 (186)

Escape to the country! Free hold lockup premises with permanent P.P. Low business rates split level building, area approx 48 sq metres. Open plan reception, waiting and office/drawing areas upstairs, two Tattoo rooms & WC downstairs. Character building on main road in Cornish harbour village. Good rep, est nine years, scope to expand, Unique Opportunity. OIRO £149,950. Contact Neil on 07922144511 (186)

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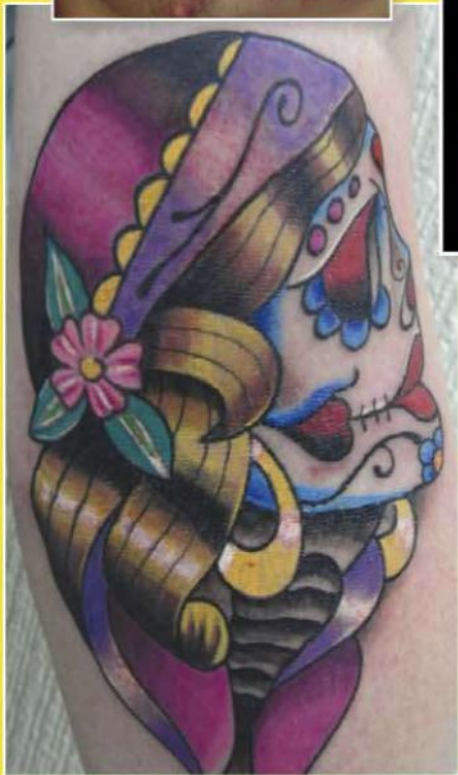
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